

Increasing Profits with Continuous Audience Research



GEORGE GALLUP, DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTE, WITH HIS SIX EXECUTIVE ASSISTANTS

From left: Associate Director David Ogilvy, Supervisor of Interviewers Paul Sheatsley, Arthur Keiser In Charge of Cross-section, Dr. Gallup, Box-Office Analyst Emery Ruby, Barbara Miller In Charge of Experimental Research, Chief Statistician Dr. Albert Annis.

The INSTITUTE's staff now numbers one hundred and thirteen. Pictured below are some of the headquarter's staff outside the Princeton office. Not shown are the interviewers who every week contact thousands of ticket-buyers throughout the United States.

THE PRINCETON HEADQUARTERS OF AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE



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with
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AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

PRINCETON

1941

Foreword

Since March, 1940, our reports have been going forward to RKO at the rate of several a week, immediately upon completion of the specific investigations involved.

These accumulated findings have now reached such proportions that it has seemed advisable to assemble and recapitulate them in one convenient volume.

This volume, however, is more than a mere compilation, a mere recapitulation. It is a synthesis. The piecemeal parts have been integrated into a whole. And a certain perspective now comes to play upon this whole.

It is now six years since I began my first experiments in this field. Today I am more than ever convinced that audience research is destined to play a vital part in the future development of the motion picture industry. And I believe that anybody who reads this report will share my conviction.

George Gallup

Princeton
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CHAPTER I

What Is Audience Research?

MARLENE DIETRICH is not among the first hundred ticket-selling stars at the box-office. The average RKO picture opens with a publicity penetration of 24 per cent. Sixty-two per cent of the theatergoing public cannot even recognize their exhibitor when they see him. These, among hundreds of other hitherto unsuspected facts, are what audience research brings to light.

Six years ago, Dr. Gallup decided to find out whether research procedures which had proved their validity in measuring public opinion on political issues could also be applied to measuring public demand in the field of motion pictures.

Although he had played a pioneer role in the development of analogous fields of research — notably magazine and newspaper reading, radio listening, and advertising — Dr. Gallup found that motion pictures involved problems which were entirely different and much more complex. He therefore set up AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE, dedicated exclusively to research in the field of motion pictures.

This Institute embarked upon a series of experimental studies which were to occupy the next four years. Mr. George J. Schaefer was the only person in the motion picture industry to be aware of the progress of these experiments and it was his encouragement which persuaded Dr. Gallup to continue them until positive results were achieved.

The difficulties were enormous. In one field alone — the measurement of marquee values — no less than seventeen studies were required before satisfactory procedures could be worked out. The perfection of procedures for testing story values required considerably more than seventeen experimental studies, lasting over a period of more than a year.

In March, 1940, Mr. Schaefer reached the conclusion that his company would profit by retaining the services of the Institute, and a con-

tract was signed on an exclusive basis for a period of one year. In March, 1941, this contract was renewed on similar terms.

II.

It is remarkable how many minds converged on the idea of applying GALLUP POLL procedures to research in the field of motion pictures. For example, in May, 1939, Mr. Darryl Zanuck wrote to Dr. Gallup:

"I have watched with interest the results that have been attained by your surveys of public opinion, and feel that these methods and principles might be applied to the motion picture public with direct benefit to the production of screen plays.

"My observations have convinced me that you have evolved the organization and technique that would be ideal for gathering the material needed for the guidance of a motion picture company.

"The survey would embrace the trends of the public taste in stories, what proportion prefers novels, biographies, stage plays, original stories; what is the public's evaluation of individual stars, of newer players . . ."

Shortly afterward, Mr. Samuel Goldwyn also approached the Institute and outlined a program of audience research which was almost identical with the program then in process of execution. In fact, Mr. Goldwyn proposed polls on problems which had already formed the subjects of Institute reports.

Mr. David O. Selznick, being yet another distinguished producer to foresee the potentialities of audience research, actually went so far as to organize an experimental research program of his own.

III.

It has been said that every time John Citizen walks up to the box-office and pays his quarter he casts a vote in favor of the picture being shown. To a certain limited extent that is true. Unfortunately, however, these votes are not cast until the picture is finished. By this procedure it costs millions of dollars to find out what the public wants and does not want.

The function of audience research is to give the public an opportunity to cast a vote *before the picture is made, before the money is spent*.

Audience research is no academic exercise in search of interesting shelf-material. It is a continuing service which impinges on the day-to-day problems of the motion picture executive at a hundred points. It is never without practical dollars-and-cents value.

When a producer conceives an idea for a new picture, he normally exercises the precaution of trying it out on his friends. Audience research makes it possible for him to try out his ideas not only on his friends, but also on the ticket-buying public at large — men and women, rich and poor, old and young.

In addition to the fact that the verdict of the box-office comes too late, it also suffers from the limitation that it is only a *blanket* verdict which leaves the producer guessing as to which of the many factors involved are really responsible for the picture's failure or success.

For example, a large number of theatergoers have cast a vote by buying a ticket to see DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE. A vote for what? For the story? For Tracy? For Mr. Fleming's direction? For Lana Turner? For Ingrid Bergman? It is seldom, if ever, that a high box-office gross amounts to a blanket endorsement of *all* the factors involved. So, MGM is left little the wiser. They still don't know how many tickets were sold by the story, how many by Tracy, how many by Turner, how many by Bergman.

When a picture succeeds, would it not be wise to find out which of the many factors involved were chiefly responsible for that success?

When a picture has failed, would it not be worth while to conduct a scientific post-mortem into the precise causes of its failure — to find out exactly why the public stayed away, so that the same mistakes need never be made again? The research procedures employed by this Institute make it possible to isolate and evaluate all the factors, not only in post-mortem inquiries into a picture's failure or success, but also in *pre-natal* studies of its audience acceptance value.

It must never be supposed that audience research is a substitute for creative thinking or experienced judgment. Far from it.

Yet there are moments when every motion picture executive, no matter how long and varied his experience, or how brilliant his creative ability, must question his own infallibility as a judge of audience reactions. It is at such times that research can help.

AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE has no ax to grind. We do not set out to prove anything. We are not crusaders. We are not reformers. As a fact-finding organization our only function, our only aim is to ascertain by rigidly objective methods how the ticket-buying public — your customers — will react, and to report our findings to you, without fear or favor.

At the same time no useful purpose would be served if we confined our functions to bald statistical reports without trying to help the motion picture executive interpret their significance. Therefore, a certain amount of interpretive, explanatory matter is incorporated in the text. This is kept to a minimum, for it is the constant endeavor of those of us who are charged with the responsibility of drawing conclusions from the polls to avoid intruding our private opinions. Any mere opinions are always plainly labeled as such, and are always offered with the greatest diffidence. We report the facts, but we insist upon emphasizing that the conclusions to be drawn from them have their limitations.

The extent to which the Institute has been successful in accurately measuring and predicting audience reactions is something which can be judged only by looking at the record.

The danger is that we should claim more success than we have yet achieved. Audience research is no magic panacea. Much of our work is only now emerging from the experimental stage. We have made many mistakes. There are still difficulties remaining to be solved. In six years we have learned a lot. But whatever happens there will always be intangibles left in show business, and these intangibles will prevent audience research from ever achieving infallibility.

It would be going too far to suppose that audience research can ever provide a blanket answer to the question: "What does the public want?" Even in so standardized a product as the automobile, the public seems to want several different makes and an interminable succession of models.

So, any researcher who pretends to state in categorical terms what the public wants, is guilty of practicing his profession under false pretenses. Mr. Nicholas Schenck's old aphorism — "There's nothing wrong with this industry that good pictures won't cure" — still represents the absolute limit of generalization. And while AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE itself occasionally ventures a generalization as the result of cumulative experience and observation, nevertheless it is always dangerous to base one's judgment of any single property on a prior generalization which,

in the particular instance in question, may have been set at naught by some new and hidden circumstance.

The Institute can find out for you how the public will react to *any specific picture*. It cannot, and it would not claim to be able to, provide sets of all-inclusive and infallible formulas.

IV.

In the field of politics the professional politicians and columnists began by resisting the GALLUP POLL. They were afraid that it would invade their prerogatives, that it was a direct threat to their jobs. But as the years passed, they came to realize that the Poll was a tool *which they themselves could use*.

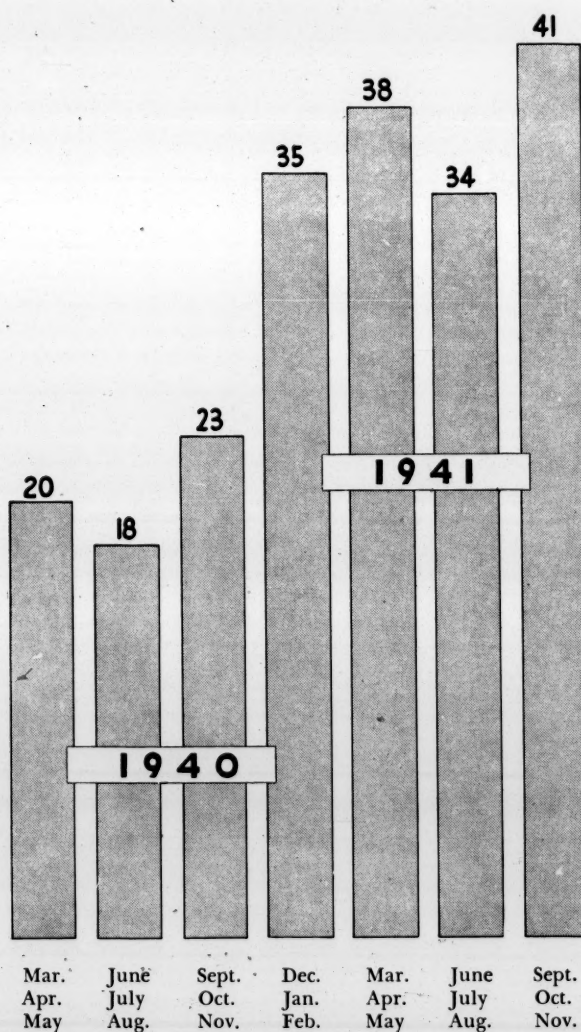
Audience research is for the motion picture executive who does *not* know all the answers. It is for the navigator who realizes his own fallibility. It is for the producer whose genius derives its impetus from divine discontent. It is for the man who is still learning — for the mind which is still open.

Here are just two examples out of dozens of what happens when the producer decides to back his own opinion against the composite opinion of the ticket-buying public — when he elects to run past the warning signals hung out by the Institute.

- 1) The Institute predicted that, despite the presence of two considerable marquee names in the cast, and despite Mr. Garson Kanin, *THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WANTED* would never succeed at the box-office.
- 2) In a series of pre-production surveys the Institute found that the audience acceptance of *THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER* was extremely low and advised RKO not to proceed.

The following chart shows the number of reports issued by the Institute to RKO, by quarterly periods, from March, 1940, to November, 1941. The volume of research has shown a steady increase.

INSTITUTE REPORTS TO RKO



V.

It is the function of audience research to bridge the gap between the producer and his *ultimate* customers — to give him, as it were, a private line to the mythical 'Average Theatergoer.' The keystone of this bridge is the Institute's corps of interviewers.

This corps of interviewers, under the leadership of Mr. Paul B. Sheatsley, consists of ninety highly-trained men and women located in typical

communities throughout the country. Since the interviewing procedures are more complex than those employed in other fields of consumer research, the emphasis has to be on *quality* of interviewing rather than on quantity. However, in surveys where a specially large number of cases is required, the Institute also has access to the entire field staff used by the GALLUP POLL.

These interviewers know what it is to drive through a Maine snow-storm to make a farm interview; to trudge across Kansas wheat fields on a blistering day to interview a thresher on the job; to travel through the red-clay mud of Georgia in a drenching rainstorm. Their assignments may take them into a third-floor tenement in New York City's East Side, or require them to argue their way past a uniformed doorman guarding a smart Park Avenue apartment. They talk to the prominent industrialist who runs a huge factory employing thousands of workers, just as they talk to the old lady who silently mops his office when everyone else has gone home.

LOCATION OF AUDIENCE RESEARCH INTERVIEWERS

CITIES OVER 500,000	CITIES 100,000 TO 500,000	TOWNS 10,000 TO 100,000	TOWNS UNDER 10,000
New York, N. Y. Chicago, Ill. Philadelphia, Pa. San Francisco, Cal. Boston, Mass. Pittsburgh, Pa. Detroit, Mich. St. Louis, Mo. Cleveland, Ohio Buffalo, N. Y. Milwaukee, Wis.	Albany, N. Y. Lowell, Mass. Newark, N. J. Trenton, N. J. Yonkers, N. Y. Rochester, N. Y. Reading, Pa. Syracuse, N. Y. Indianapolis, Ind. Columbus, Ohio Cincinnati, Ohio Omaha, Neb. Kansas City, Mo. Minneapolis, Minn. San Antonio, Tex. Birmingham, Ala. Denver, Colo. Portland, Ore. New Orleans, La. Atlanta, Ga. Toledo, Ohio Des Moines, Iowa Oklahoma City, Okla. Richmond, Va.	Danbury, Conn. Connellsville, Pa. New Brunswick, N. J. Lawrence, Mass. East Orange, N. J. Wilkes-Barre, Pa. Farrell, Pa. Chillicothe, Ohio LaFayette, Ind. Zanesville, Ohio Lincoln, Neb. Roanoke, Va. Lexington, Ky. Fort Smith, Ark. Jackson, Miss. Vancouver, Wash. St. Joseph, Mo. Bay City, Mich. La Crosse, Wis. McAlester, Okla. Bloomington, Ind. Everett, Wash. Binghamton, N. Y. Geneva, N. Y.	Kutztown, Pa. Lansford, Pa. Etowah, Tenn. Russellville, Ark. New Braunfels, Tex. Taylor, Tex. Alexander City, Ala. Pasco, Wash. Washington, Iowa Princeton, Ill. N. Billerica, Mass. Cooperstown, N. Y. Pendleton, Ore. Punxsutawney, Pa. Milledgeville, Ga. Wellsville, N. Y. Wathena, Kan.

The distribution of interviewers is based on the approximate distribution of the producer's gross. Los Angeles is omitted from the cross-section for many obvious reasons.

Every week the Institute sends out three different questionnaires [ballots] to the interviewers. Every question is first tested in a miniature test-tube survey to insure that it is not 'loaded.'

Each interviewer is assigned to interview so many males, so many females, so many in each income-group, so many in each age-group — all in proportion to the total box-office contribution of these various groups. [See Chapter IX for an account of some of the cross-sectional controls employed.]

VI.

Size of sample is generally the least understood factor in this field of research. A belief persists in the lay mind that the most accurate survey must necessarily be the one which derives from the greatest number of interviews. Those who cling to this theory received a rude shock, to be sure, when the LITERARY DIGEST's two-million ballot poll ran afoul in 1936. But the association in the public mind between accuracy and number of persons polled is of such long standing that the real facts have been obscured.

Actually, it is safe to say that no nation-wide poll in the history of this country ever went wrong because too few persons were reached. A survey which predicts an election within 5 per cent is generally regarded as "amazingly accurate." *Yet, theoretically, this degree of accuracy can be attained with from 600 to 900 ballots.*

It is a highly significant fact that of the LITERARY DIGEST's 19-point error in 1936, less than one-tenth of one per cent could reasonably have been due to the *size* of sample. One-tenth of one per cent is the range of error which can be expected with practical certainty in a sample of 2,227,500 cases where opinion divides in the ratio of 55 to 45. The DIGEST's final report, showing Landon with 56 per cent, was based on 2,376,523 ballots. Virtually all of the DIGEST's 19-point error was due to two other factors which determine accuracy in this field of opinion research — *cross-section* and *timing*.

The empirical principle governing the number of cases can be stated as follows: *a sample is adequate in size when an increase in number of cases fails to produce significant differences in results.*

CHAPTER II

The Continuing Audit of Marquee Values

IN A SERIES of eight audits the Institute has measured the marquee value of 120 top ranking players. Each player's following has been analyzed by different segments of the ticket-buying public — by males and by females, by income-groups, by age-groups, by size of community and by geographic region. Charts have traced the effect of every picture on the marquee value of the players appearing in it.

The following twenty players [arranged in alphabetical order] have shown the most notable gains since the Institute's first Audit in April, 1940:

Abbott & Costello	Rita Hayworth
Jack Benny	Bob Hope
Humphrey Bogart	Dorothy Lamour
Madeleine Carroll	Pat O'Brien
Joan Crawford	Rosalind Russell
Olivia De Havilland	Ann Rutherford
Alice Faye	Ann Sheridan
Judy Garland	Robert Taylor
Greer Garson	Lana Turner
Betty Grable	Orson Welles

In addition, as an extra service, the Institute has twice measured the future chances of the newcomers, or 'Dark Horses.' We have also undertaken detailed studies of public opinion in relation to personalities in whom RKO has been especially interested — Orson Welles, Ronald Colman, Lucille Ball, Paul Muni, Gloria Swanson and George Sanders. These studies are summarized at the end of this chapter.

II.

For the last nine years the radio networks and their clients have sponsored a program of audience research known as the Cooperative Analysis of Broadcasting or 'Crossley Rating.' * The Crossley rating of a radio star has come to be accepted as an index of his dollar value.

In the belief that a similar index would be valuable in the field of motion pictures, the Institute has developed a procedure for measuring the marquee value of motion picture personalities in terms of their *power to sell tickets*.

Some producers argue that box-office figures provide an adequate index of marquee values. Unfortunately, however, box-office figures do not isolate the contribution of all the different elements involved in a picture's failure or success.

Other producers rely on *fan mail* to guide them in their estimates of personality values. But writing fan letters to movie stars is not the normal habit of the average American, and those who indulge in it do not represent a cross-section of the theatergoing public.† Furthermore, there are some personality *types* which attract more fan mail than others. For these reasons, it would be dangerous to place undue reliance on fan mail as an index of marquee values.

Then there are those authorities whose estimates of personality values are influenced by the volatile thermometer of Hollywood gossip, by the eloquence of powerful talent agents, by personal acquaintance with the star and by other factors, none of which bears any relation to the realities of public demand.

* George Gallup has been on the Governing Committee and Treasurer of the C.A.B. since March, 1934.

† See HOLLYWOOD, by Leo C. Rosten, p. 409 ff., for an analysis of fan mail by age, sex and geographical distribution. Rosten found that about 90 per cent of all fan letters came from persons under 21; between 85 and 90 per cent came from girls.

III.

The Institute's Continuing Audit provides the most realistic source of information on marquee values. It is believed that this Audit is unique for the following reasons:

- 1) *It is the only study in which the people questioned represent an accurate cross-section of the actual theatergoing public.* In technical language, the Institute's Audit is a 'sampling referendum.' The results obtained represent the opinions of the entire theatergoing public.
- 2) *The results are obtained by personal interview instead of by mailed questionnaires.* The star polls conducted by newspapers rely on ballots mailed in by readers. They have been found to draw the bulk of their votes from groups which do not in any way represent a cross-section of the theatergoing public.

Furthermore, these newspaper polls are subject to uncontrolled ballot-stuffing. It was no surprise when, in 1940, the most famous of all newspaper polls, that conducted by the NEW YORK DAILY NEWS for the "King and Queen of the Movies," was finally obliged to commit suicide, after placing Sonja Henie in second place and Richard Greene in ninth!

- 3) *The questions upon which the Continuing Audit is based are entirely different from those used in previous attempts to measure personality values.* Seventeen experimental studies were carried out by the Institute, and many research procedures were tried and discarded before one was evolved which would uncover the true facts about theatergoers' player-preferences. No comparable research has been conducted elsewhere into the methodology of this particular problem.

For example, in framing our questions, what *words* were we to use? The average American calls a motion picture personality a 'movie star.' But we could not use this phrase because it inflates the vote for the glamorous prototypes such as Gable,

Garbo, Crawford and Dietrich, and fails to bring out the true vote for personalities who are not thought of primarily as 'movie stars' — Jack Benny, Bing Crosby, etc. It also fails to bring out the vote for the heavies and the comedians — Wallace Beery, Pat O'Brien, Abbott and Costello, W. C. Fields, etc. So we could not use the phrase 'movie star.' That was *one* of the problems.

Then there was the factor of *memory*. If you ask, "Who are your favorite movie stars?," there is an unfortunate tendency to name those who, by reason of recent publicity, come first to mind. So we could not rely on spontaneous mention. A 'roster' had to be used. That raised other problems.

Most important of all was the general problem of *definition*. What were we measuring? Were we measuring the *degree* to which John Q. Citizen likes Ginger Rogers? Were we measuring something vague and nebulous like the 'popularity' of Ginger Rogers? No. *We had to measure the number of tickets the name Ginger Rogers will sell.* That and nothing else. Not so easy.

These and many other problems had to be solved before the Institute was ready to embark on its Continuing Audit of Marquee Values.

- 4) *The fact that the Audit is continuous instead of occasional enables the Institute to measure the effect of each picture upon the marquee value of the personalities appearing in it.*
- 5) *We have been able to analyze each personality's rating by male and female theatergoers, by age-groups, by income-groups, by size of community and by geographic region.*

IV.

What about the 'star polls' conducted among exhibitors, such as the poll sponsored annually by the MOTION PICTURE HERALD?

To begin with, the exhibitor cannot help being influenced by his own personal predilections. As a rule he is a male, in the age-group

30 to 60, and in the upper-middle income-group. It is therefore natural that the HERALD poll should over-value the personalities who particularly appeal to this age-sex-economic segment. For example, Wallace Beery emerged seventh in the HERALD poll at a time when he ranked only twentieth with the ticket-buying public—he happens to be abnormally popular with males in the exhibitor's own age-group. For the same reason, James Cagney emerged fifth in the HERALD poll when actually he ranked only nineteenth with the public. Conversely, the HERALD's exhibitors show a tendency to under-estimate the stars who do not appeal to them. Being men, they ranked Bette Davis eighth at a time when their customers were ranking her fourth. They ranked Ginger Rogers twenty-second when their customers ranked her fifteenth.

These facts demonstrate that the average exhibitor, in attempting to estimate his customers' tastes, is strongly influenced by his own tastes.

The HERALD poll asks exhibitors to "list in order of their box-office strength the ten players who drew the greatest number of patrons to your theater from September 1, 1939, to September 1, 1940." This question would be perfectly fair if players appeared in solo performances, without other players and without benefit of story. But as it is, exhibitors are called upon to guess whether it was the player, or the story, or the other players, or the publicity which drew the patrons to their theaters.

For example, take Gable: How should the exhibitor estimate his popularity—by the number of patrons drawn to the theater to see *GONE WITH THE WIND*, *STRANGE CARGO*, *BOOM TOWN*, *THEY MET IN BOMBAY*, or *HONKY TONK*? Was it the story, the publicity, or Gable who packed them in to see *GONE WITH THE WIND*, and in what proportions? Was it Gable or Crawford or the story which kept them away from *STRANGE CARGO*? Was it Gable, Tracy, Colbert, Lamarr, or the story which drew so many patrons to the theater when *BOOM TOWN* was playing?

The HERALD fell into another pitfall: Its question—"list the ten players who drew the greatest number of patrons to your theater from September 1, 1939, to September 1, 1940"—was loaded against players who had not made a picture in this period and players who had appeared in only *one* picture. For example, Irene Dunne and Jeanette MacDonald had only one picture each during the period between September 1, 1939, and September 1, 1940, and it was therefore no surprise to find them both many places too low in the HERALD poll.

V.

Most stars do not gain support equally from all groups of theatergoers, but appeal particularly to certain segments of the population. Naturally, the variation is greater in the case of some stars than in others. But the star who is equally popular with both sexes, all age-groups, all income levels, and in all parts of the country, is the rare exception rather than the rule.

Theatergoers have a tendency to project themselves into the situation portrayed on the screen, to imagine themselves in the place of the star, or [perhaps subconsciously] to pretend they *are* the star.

Obviously, it is easier to imagine yourself in Mickey Rooney's shoes if you are a boy of seventeen than if you are a middle-aged housewife. Broadly speaking, that is why Rooney is overwhelmingly more popular with boys of his own age than with any other group of the population.*

Many other instances point to the importance of self-identification as a factor in determining marquee values. For example, Judy Garland, Deanna Durbin and Linda Darnell are most popular with girls of their own age. Muni is strongest with men over thirty-one, as are also Lionel Barrymore, William Powell and Edward Arnold. May Robson is particularly popular with elderly females. Joan Crawford, Miriam Hopkins, Irene Dunne, Claudette Colbert and Norma Shearer are most popular with women over thirty.

Seventy-eight per cent of the female stars are more popular with women than with men, including such stars as Myrna Loy, Ginger Rogers, Carole Lombard, Loretta Young, Marlene Dietrich and Norma Shearer.

By the same token 60 per cent of the male stars are more popular with men than with women. The first thirteen stars, as ranked by men, are all male.

This phenomenon of self-identification can be seen at work in other fields. For example: The old theory that the best way to interest women in an advertisement is to show a picture of a man, or the best way to inter-

* While 52 per cent of all attendance is by persons under twenty-five years of age, only 2.1 per cent of 'A' actors and 21.3 per cent of 'A' actresses are under twenty-five. This suggests that there are not nearly enough adolescent stars to satisfy the demand. Here is a richer market potential than exists in the age-group of most new players being groomed by Hollywood today.

est a man is to show a picture of a woman, has no real foundation in fact.
The best way to attract women is to have women in the advertisement.
The best way to attract men is by having men, or men and women.

* * * * *

The following female stars [78 per cent of the total] are more popular with female than with male theatergoers:

Jean Arthur	Vivien Leigh
Lucille Ball	Carole Lombard
Madeleine Carroll	Myrna Loy
Claudette Colbert	Ida Lupino
Joan Crawford	Jeanette MacDonald
Bette Davis	Anna Neagle
Laraine Day	Merle Oberon
Olivia De Havilland	Maureen O'Hara
Marlene Dietrich	Eleanor Powell
Irene Dunne	Ginger Rogers
Deanna Durbin	Rosalind Russell
Joan Fontaine	Martha Scott
Greta Garbo	Norma Shearer
Judy Garland	Anne Shirley
Greer Garson	Barbara Stanwyck
Sonja Henie	Margaret Sullavan
Katharine Hepburn	Shirley Temple
Gloria Jean	Jane Withers
Priscilla Lane	Loretta Young

The following female stars [only 14 per cent of the total] are more popular with male than with female theatergoers:

Paulette Goddard	Dorothy Lamour
Betty Grable	Ann Sheridan
Hedy Lamarr	Ann Sothorn
Lana Turner	

The following female stars [8 per cent of the total] are equally popular with both sexes:

Joan Bennett	Linda Darnell
Joan Blondell	Alice Faye

The following male stars [60 per cent of the total] are more popular with male than with female theatergoers:

Edward Arnold	Charles Laughton
Lew Ayres	Fred MacMurray
Lionel Barrymore	Joel McCrea
Wallace Beery	Victor McLaglen
Jack Benny	Thomas Mitchell
Humphrey Bogart	Frank Morgan
Bob Burns	Paul Muni
James Cagney	Pat O'Brien
Gary Cooper	George Raft
Jackie Cooper	Basil Rathbone
Bing Crosby	Edward G. Robinson
Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.	Cesar Romero
Errol Flynn	Mickey Rooney
Henry Fonda	George Sanders
Clark Gable	Randolph Scott
John Garfield	Spencer Tracy
Bob Hope	John Wayne
Kay Kyser	Orson Welles

Robert Young

The following male stars [only 32 per cent of the total] are more popular with female than with male theatergoers:

Brian Aherne	Ray Milland
Don Ameche	Robert Montgomery
Charles Boyer	Dennis Morgan
George Brent	Laurence Olivier
Ronald Colman	John Payne
Melvyn Douglas	Dick Powell
Nelson Eddy	Tyrone Power
Jeffrey Lynn	Ronald Reagan
Fredric March	James Stewart
Herbert Marshall	Robert Taylor

The following male stars [8 per cent of the total] are equally popular with both sexes:

Fred Astaire	Cary Grant
James Craig	George Murphy
William Powell	

The following stars are more popular with the upper income-groups than with the lower [notice that 38 per cent of them are foreign-born]:

Jean Arthur	Brian Aherne
Madeleine Carroll	Edward Arnold
Claudette Colbert	Charles Boyer
Bette Davis	Ronald Colman
Irene Dunne	Melvyn Douglas
Deanna Durbin	Nelson Eddy
Joan Fontaine	Cary Grant
Greta Garbo	Charles Laughton
Greer Garson	Fredric March
Paulette Goddard	Herbert Marshall
Katharine Hepburn	Robert Montgomery
Vivien Leigh	Paul Muni
Carole Lombard	Laurence Olivier
Myrna Loy	William Powell
Anna Neagle	Basil Rathbone
Rosalind Russell	Orson Welles
Martha Scott	
Norma Shearer	
Margaret Sullavan	
Loretta Young	

The following stars are more popular with the lower income-groups than with the upper [notice that only one of them is foreign-born]:

Joan Bennett	Lew Ayres
Joan Blondell	Jack Benny
Alice Faye	Humphrey Bogart
Judy Garland	George Brent
Betty Grable	Bob Burns
Sonja Henie	James Cagney
Gloria Jean	Jackie Cooper
Dorothy Lamour	Bing Crosby
Priscilla Lane	Errol Flynn
Ann Sheridan	Kay Kyser
Anne Shirley	Fred MacMurray
Ann Sothorn	Victor McLaglen
Shirley Temple	Ray Milland
Jane Withers	George Murphy
	Pat O'Brien
	John Payne
	Dick Powell
	George Raft
	Cesar Romero
	Mickey Rooney
	John Wayne

VI.

The Dollar Index

[October, 1941]

To help you assess the relative value of players as based solely on their power to sell tickets at the box-office, we translate each player's index into dollars, using the arbitrary formula that the average of the first twenty players rates \$150,000 per picture.

This 'price list' does not reflect the market situation. Nor does it take into account the many other factors which rightly or wrongly influence the price of stars.

[October, 1941]

OVER \$150,000		Per Picture			Per Picture
1.	Tracy, Spencer	\$221,000	48.	Arthur, Jean	\$83,000
2.	Gable, Clark	\$210,000		{ Ameche, Don	\$82,000
3.	Davis, Bette	\$207,000	49.	{ Carroll, Madeleine	\$82,000
4.	Rooney, Mickey	\$187,000		{ Garfield, John	\$82,000
5.	Stewart, James	\$171,000	52.	Douglas, Melvyn	\$81,000
6.	Hope, Bob	\$167,000	53.	March, Fredric	\$78,000
7.	Cooper, Gary	\$164,000	54.	{ Lombard, Carole	\$77,000
8.	Flynn, Errol	\$158,000		{ Bogart, Humphrey	\$77,000
\$100,000—\$150,000			\$50,000—\$75,000		
9.	Grant, Cary	\$145,000	56.	Hepburn, Katharine	\$74,000
10.	Abbott & Costello	\$141,000	57.	{ Eddy, Nelson	\$73,000
11.	Loy, Myrna	\$137,000		{ Welles, Orson	\$73,000
12.	Garland, Judy	\$134,000		{ Garson, Greer	\$71,000
13.	Rogers, Ginger	\$133,000	59.	{ Young, Loretta	\$71,000
14.	Cagney, James	\$130,000		{ Laughton, Charles	\$71,000
15.	Durbin, Deanna	\$121,000		{ Kyser, Kay	\$68,000
16.	Powell, William	\$119,000	62.	{ Sullavan, Margaret	\$68,000
17.	O'Brien, Pat	\$115,000		{ Pidgeon, Walter	\$68,000
18.	{ Beery, Wallace	\$114,000	65.	Astaire, Fred	\$66,000
	{ Power, Tyrone	\$114,000	66.	Sothorn, Ann	\$64,000
20.	Crosby, Bing	\$113,000	67.	Morgan, Frank	\$61,000
21.	Barrymore, Lionel	\$109,000	68.	{ Lane, Priscilla	\$59,000
22.	Benny, Jack	\$108,000		{ Brent, George	\$59,000
	{ Colman, Ronald	\$107,000	70.	{ Bennett, Joan	\$58,000
23.	{ Faye, Alice	\$107,000		{ Goddard, Paulette	\$58,000
	{ Dunne, Irene	\$107,000	72.	{ Powell, Eleanor	\$57,000
26.	Taylor, Robert	\$106,000		{ Withers, Jane	\$57,000
27.	Muni, Paul	\$105,000	74.	{ Garbo, Greta	\$56,000
28.	{ Robinson, Edward G.	\$101,000		{ Marshall, Herbert	\$56,000
	{ MacDonald, Jeanette	\$101,000	76.	Olivier, Laurence	\$55,000
30.	Stanwyck, Barbara	\$100,000	77.	{ Hayworth, Rita	\$53,000
				{ Oakie, Jack	\$53,000
				{ Bergman, Ingrid	\$50,000
			79.	{ Young, Robert	\$50,000
				{ Rainer, Luise	\$50,000
\$75,000—\$100,000			\$25,000—\$50,000		
31.	{ Leigh, Vivien	\$97,000	82.	Ayres, Lew	\$49,000
	{ Fonda, Henry	\$97,000	83.	Rathbone, Basil	\$47,000
	{ Boyer, Charles	\$96,000		{ Milland, Ray	\$45,000
33.	{ Montgomery, Robert	\$96,000	84.	{ Blondell, Joan	\$45,000
	{ Russell, Rosalind	\$96,000		{ Romero, Cesar	\$45,000
36.	Colbert, Claudette	\$93,000		{ Rutherford, Ann	\$44,000
37.	Shearer, Norma	\$92,000	87.	{ Morris, Wayne	\$44,000
38.	MacMurray, Fred	\$90,000		{ Arnold, Edward	\$43,000
	{ Crawford, Joan	\$88,000	89.	{ Lynn, Jeffrey	\$43,000
39.	{ De Havilland, Olivia	\$88,000		{ Burns, Bob	\$42,000
	{ Raft, George	\$88,000	91.	{ Reagan, Ronald	\$42,000
42.	Lamarr, Hedy	\$87,000		{ Darnell, Linda	\$41,000
	{ Henie, Sonja	\$85,000	93.	{ Fairbanks, Douglas, Jr.	\$41,000
43.	{ Lamour, Dorothy	\$85,000			
	{ Turner, Lana	\$85,000			
	{ Grable, Betty	\$84,000			
46.	{ Sheridan, Ann	\$84,000			

INCREASING PROFITS

\$25,000-\$50,000 (Cont'd)		Per Picture		Per Picture	
95.	Bellamy, Ralph	\$40,000	129.	Aherne, Brian	\$21,000
	Lupino, Ida	\$39,000		Hayward, Louis	\$21,000
96.	Scott, Randolph	\$39,000		Shirley, Anne	\$21,000
	McCrea, Joel	\$39,000		Marshall, Brenda	\$21,000
	Powell, Dick	\$38,000	133.	Granville, Bonita	\$20,000
99.	Menjou, Adolphe	\$38,000		Fontaine, Joan	\$19,000
	Martin, Tony	\$37,000	134.	Holden, William	\$19,000
101.	Payne, John	\$37,000		Holt, Tim	\$19,000
	Sanders, George	\$37,000	137.	Landis, Carole	\$18,000
104.	Cooper, Jackie	\$35,000		O'Keefe, Dennis	\$18,000
105.	Nolan, Lloyd	\$34,000	139.	Simms, Ginny	\$17,000
106.	Meredith, Burgess	\$33,000		Lee, Carolyn	\$16,000
	Bartholomew, Freddie	\$32,000	140.	O'Hara, Maureen	\$16,000
107.	Morgan, Dennis	\$32,000		Fitzgerald, Geraldine	\$16,000
	Martin, Mary	\$32,000		Joyce, Brenda	\$15,000
110.	Hunter, Ian	\$31,000	143.	Ball, Lucille	\$15,000
111.	Dietrich, Marlene	\$30,000		Lake, Veronica	\$15,000
112.	Scott, Martha	\$29,000	146.	Field, Betty	\$14,000
	Neagle, Anna	\$28,000		Massey, Ilona	\$14,000
	Day, Laraine	\$28,000		Simon, Simone	\$13,000
113.	Hall, Jon	\$28,000	148.	Tierney, Gene	\$13,000
	Miranda, Carmen	\$28,000		Craig, James	\$13,000
	Wyman, Jane	\$28,000		Cummings, Robert	\$13,000
	Donlevy, Brian	\$27,000		Howard, John	\$11,000
118.	Kelly, Nancy	\$27,000	152.	Carroll, John	\$11,000
	Murphy, George	\$27,000		Mature, Victor	\$11,000
	Hayden, Stirling	\$27,000		Ford, Glenn	\$11,000
122.	Foster, Preston	\$26,000		Stack, Robert	\$10,000
	Wayne, John	\$26,000	156.	Hughes, Mary Beth	\$10,000
	Hussey, Ruth	\$25,000		Bolger, Ray	\$10,000
124.	Oberon, Merle	\$25,000		Coburn, Charles	\$8,000
BELOW \$25,000			159.	Bryan, Jane	\$8,000
126.	Albert, Eddie	\$24,000		Leslie, Joan	\$8,000
127.	Preston, Robert	\$23,000	162.	O'Brien, Edmond	\$6,000
128.	Trevor, Claire	\$22,000	163.	Gilmore, Virginia	\$5,000
			164.	Ellison, James	\$4,000
				Arnaz, Desi	\$4,000
			166.	Lee, Anna	\$3,000

VII.

Marquee Value of Two Stars

In a nation-wide survey conducted in May, 1941, we measured the marquee value of ten pairs of stars. Comparison of the results obtained in this study with the marquee value of the individual personalities as measured in the Audit reveals that in almost every case two big marquee names can sell more tickets appearing separately in two films than appearing together in one. The main reason appears to be that there is always some degree of *overlapping* or *duplication* between the followers of any two stars.

For example, Spencer Tracy's followers include almost all of Mickey Rooney's followers, so that adding Rooney to a picture which already has Tracy *adds only 2 or 3 per cent to the number of theatergoers who will want to see that picture.*

There is also the factor of *incompatibility* to be considered. In the case of LUCKY PARTNERS, we found that a considerable number of theatergoers disapproved of teaming Rogers with Colman, on account of their disparity in age.

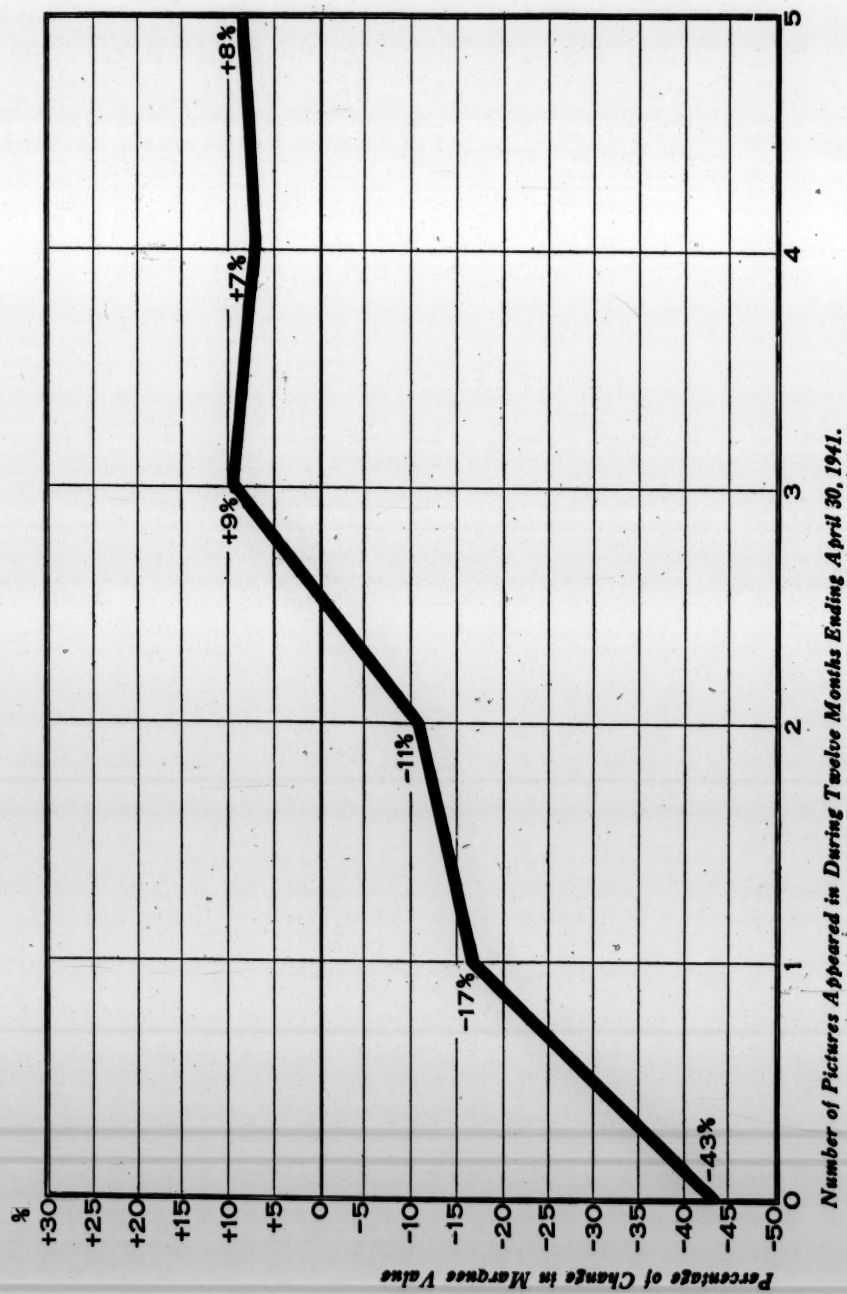
In some cases the addition of the second star is found actually to *reduce* the marquee strength of the picture. For example, as of today Ginger Rogers by herself is stronger than Rogers + Astaire.

These facts constitute a powerful argument against the indiscriminate piling up of high-priced talent in one picture.

* * *

A few months after receiving this report, RKO told us that Cary Grant would appear with Ginger Rogers in ARMS AND THE MAN. We replied that the addition of Cary Grant to a cast which already contained Ginger Rogers would add only about 7 per cent to the picture's box-office expectancy, whereas he would add 35 per cent to a picture which did not already contain a star. We therefore advised RKO to persuade Cary Grant to appear separately in a second Shaw play.

AVERAGE CHANGE IN MARQUEE VALUE IN RELATION TO THE
NUMBER OF PICTURES APPEARED IN DURING ONE YEAR



VIII.

How Many Pictures a Year?

There is a growing tendency for stars in the upper income brackets to limit themselves to one or two pictures a year. How many pictures *should* a star make in the course of a year?

Having measured the changing marquee value of more than a hundred personalities at regular intervals during the last two years, we are in a position to report the precise relationship between the number of pictures appeared in and the resultant gain or loss in marquee value.

NUMBER OF PICTURES APPEARED IN	NUMBER OF PLAYERS IN THE CATEGORY	AVERAGE GAIN OR LOSS IN MARQUEE VALUE %
0	5	-43
1	18	-17
2	19	-11
3	26	+ 9
4	11	+ 7
5	7	+ 8

- 1) The five stars who did not make any pictures during the last year showed an average *loss* in marquee value of 43 per cent. This means that they can sell 43 per cent fewer tickets than they could sell one year ago.
- 2) The eighteen stars who made only *one* picture during the last year showed an average *loss* in marquee value of 17 per cent.
- 3) The nineteen stars who made only *two* pictures during the last year showed an average *loss* in marquee value of 11 per cent.
- 4) The twenty-six stars who made *three* pictures during the last year showed an average *gain* in marquee value of 9 per cent.

TWELVE MONTHS ENDING MAY 1, 1941

	% of theatergoers who did not see player at all	% of theatergoers who saw player once	% twice	% three times	% four times	% five times	% six times
JAMES STEWART	15	19	22	23	14	6	1
HUMPHREY BOGART	23	28	25	17	6	1	0
DON AMECHE	20	24	25	19	12	0	0
ROSALIND RUSSELL	38	30	24	8	0	0	0
GINGER ROGERS	28	48	24	0	0	0	0
RONALD COLMAN	75	25	0	0	0	0	0

- 5) The eleven stars who made *four* pictures during the last year showed an average *gain* in marquee value of 7 per cent.
- 6) The seven stars who made *five* pictures during the last year showed an average *gain* in marquee value of 8 per cent.

These findings raise an important question: Why is it that the players who make fewer than three pictures tend to lose marquee value? The answer is *lack of circulation*. Motion picture stars and their agents seldom stop to ask themselves what proportion of the theatergoing public gets to see the pictures they make. It is too easy to assume that any picture which is a success at the box-office is seen by a majority of the customers. There could be no greater fallacy. Even a picture which grosses \$2,000,000 to the picture company is not seen by more than 50 per cent of the regular theatergoers, while a picture which grosses \$750,000 is seen by only one theatergoer in five.

When Mr. Colman made only one picture in the year ending May 1, 1941, approximately 75 per cent of the regular customers had to go a whole year without seeing him on the screen. Absence does not make the heart of a ticket-buyer grow fonder.

The same blurred reasoning which exaggerates the circulation of a 'successful' picture, also assumes that when a player works hard and makes five or six pictures in a year, then the customers get to see that player five or six times — and grow weary. Mr. Zanuck must sometimes ask himself whether the public is not growing weary of Don Ameche. He need not worry. Outside the picture business only one theatergoer in eight saw all of the pictures Ameche made last year.

Selecting six personalities who made respectively one, two, three, four, five and six pictures during the last year, we took a series of polls to find out exactly *how often* these personalities had been seen by Mr. Average Ticket-Buyer.

The results appear on the following page:

1) JAMES STEWART had made six pictures.

%

15 had not seen any of these pictures

19 had seen only one of them

22 had seen two of them

23 had seen three of them

14 had seen four of them

6 had seen five of them

only 1% had seen all six pictures

2) HUMPHREY BOGART had made five pictures.

%

23 had not seen any of these pictures

28 had seen only one of them

25 had seen two of them

17 had seen three of them

6 had seen four of them

only 1% had seen all five pictures

3) DON AMECHE had made four pictures.

%

20 had not seen any of these pictures

24 had seen only one of them

25 had seen two of them

19 had seen three of them

only 12% had seen all four pictures

4) ROSALIND RUSSELL had made three pictures.

%

38 had not seen any of these pictures

30 had seen one of them

24 had seen two of them

only 8% had seen all three pictures

5) GINGER ROGERS had made two pictures.

%

28 had not seen either of these pictures

48 had seen only one of them

only 24% had seen both pictures

6) RONALD COLMAN had made only one picture.

%

25 had seen this one picture

75 had not seen it, and therefore had not seen Mr. Colman at all during that year.

IX.

Box-Office Poison

We wanted to find out which personalities exercise the negative power to keep people away from the box-office and in what degree.

Before reporting the results of this study, we must ask the reader to recognize the fundamental difference between active *dislike* and ordinary indifference. In general we find that the average theatergoer is surprisingly tolerant and uncritical; most of his reactions are on the positive side of the wave-band — he likes a player a lot, or a little, or he is indifferent to him. Only very seldom does he actually *dislike* any player.

It might reasonably be expected that the 'dislike' ranking would be an exact reverse of the 'like' ranking. This is not the case. There is no relationship, direct or indirect, between liking and disliking, between positive and negative marquee value.

The players with the high 'dislike' vote tend to fall into well-defined groups: five are comedians; one is a sultry sex star and one is a gigolo type [these two are disliked by their own sex]; three are foreign females; three are child actors; three are singers; and two are tough guys. But in every case they are liked by more people than they are disliked by.

Now here is the significant point. If you, the reader, were invited to name the players who exercise the power to keep you away from the box-office, you would find it easy to call out a very large number of players who are, in the Senate phrase, "personally obnoxious" to you. The extraordinary thing is that the average theatergoer names *only five* on the whole list of 114.

X.

The 'Dark Horse' Experiment

In March, 1937, we conducted an experimental survey to determine which of seventy-five 'Dark Horses' showed symptoms of becoming promising investments for 1940.

The following emerged as the most promising:

Charles Boyer	Rochelle Hudson
Madeleine Carroll	Merle Oberon
Melvyn Douglas	Tyrone Power
Deanna Durbin	Luise Rainer
Alice Faye	Randolph Scott
Henry Fonda	Ann Sothorn
Olivia De Havilland	James Stewart

Today it is perhaps difficult to believe that these personalities could have been classed as Dark Horses so relatively recently as 1937. But reference to the MOTION PICTURE HERALD poll of January, 1937, shows that Madeleine Carroll, Melvyn Douglas, Deanna Durbin, Tyrone Power and James Stewart did not then rank among the first 200. Charles Boyer, Alice Faye, Olivia De Havilland, Rochelle Hudson, Luise Rainer, Randolph Scott and Ann Sothorn ranked lower than eighty-fifth. Henry Fonda and Merle Oberon ranked lower than fifty-sixth.

While these fourteen Dark Horses have not all justified our selection, it is at least open to question whether any Hollywood executive could have picked so many future winners without the guidance of a scientific poll.

During the last two years the Institute has twice repeated the Dark Horse experiment, nominating the new players who show the greatest promise.

It would be idle to suppose that these predictions will turn out to be correct in every case. Just as Luise Rainer and Rochelle Hudson have failed to achieve the success which we predicted for them in April, 1937, so it is inevitable that some of this year's leading Dark Horses will fall by the wayside.

For instance, it is doubtful whether any 'Dark Horse' can become a

big marquee name if he [or she] is used only in B pictures, or if he [or she] is forever denied the opportunity to appear opposite a major star. Subsequent polls will detect signs of slipping, and will also uncover any new promise among Dark Horses who have not yet distinguished themselves.

The results of these studies do not represent the *present* marquee values of the personalities concerned, but rather a prediction of their potential marquee values three years from the dates of the surveys. In order to arrive at our estimate of future marquee values, we measure the *intensity* of each personality's following. This procedure reveals that some of the personalities who rank high today are unlikely to maintain their position, while certain other personalities, whose identity is known to only a few theatergoers today, are likely to climb to the top.

XI.

A) "Who do you think is the best looking woman in the movies?"

September, 1941.

The replies to this question bear very little relation to the marquee values of the personalities concerned—their power to sell tickets—as may be seen from the following table:

	<i>Ranked in Order of Best Looking</i>	<i>Relative Rank in Marquee Value [8th Audit]</i>
Hedy Lamarr	1	3
Madeleine Carroll	2	8
Lana Turner	3	5
Alice Faye	4	1
Dorothy Lamour	5	4
Betty Grable	6	6
Joan Bennett	7	10
Ann Sheridan	8	7
Loretta Young	9	9
Vivien Leigh	10	2

The beauty of Madeleine Carroll, Joan Bennett and Loretta Young is more highly regarded by women than by men, while the beauty of Lamarr, Turner, Lamour, Grable and Sheridan is regarded more highly by men than by women.

B) "Who do you think is the most handsome man in the movies?"

September, 1941.

As in the case of female stars, the replies to this question bear little if any relation to the marquee values of the personalities concerned — their power to sell tickets.

	<i>Ranked in Order of Most Handsome</i>	<i>Relative Rank in Marquee Value [8th Audit]</i>
Robert Taylor	1	7
Clark Gable	2	1
Errol Flynn	3	3
Tyrone Power	4	5
Gary Cooper	5	2
Cary Grant	6	4
Ronald Colman	7	6

Considerably more men than women vote Gable most handsome, and the same is true of Errol Flynn.

XII.

Orson Welles

[Before CITIZEN KANE]

April, 1940.

A national cross-section of theatergoers was handed photographs of Orson Welles and four other personalities, and was asked to identify them. Although no clues or suggestions of any kind were given, nearly half the persons interviewed were able to identify Orson Welles. Even more surprising is the fact that Welles was identified by nearly as many persons as Fredric March.

	<i>% Identifying</i>
Clark Gable	97
Fredric March	52
Orson Welles	
With Beard	48
Without Beard	43
Dennis Morgan	18
Maureen O'Hara	4

The Institute has devoted several surveys to Orson Welles and his proposed stories. Of the various stories we have tested for Orson Welles, none has emerged higher than *INVASION FROM MARS*.

Dr. Hadley Cantril estimates * that 6,000,000 people heard the Mars broadcast—approximately the number of persons who would see a Broadway play which would run for eight years.

And for every one person who told our interviewers that they had actually heard the Mars broadcast, two others said that they regretted missing it and would welcome an opportunity to see a picture based upon the same subject. Typical was the comment of a Baltimore insurance salesman: "*I'd like to see whether I'd be as simple as the ones who heard the broadcast.*"

Perhaps the best way to convey a picture of public opinion on the subject of Mr. Welles is to reproduce a small selection of the comments recorded verbatim by our interviewers. Since these comments were not the results of detailed questioning on precise attitudes, it would be a mistake to attach too much significance to the percentage figures in their grouping.

On the whole, however, this selection does give a fairly accurate general picture of the public estimate of Mr. Welles. It can best be summarized by saying that, while the public is by no means uncritical of Mr. Welles' personality, there is a widespread *curiosity* in him.

* In *THE INVASION FROM MARS*, Princeton University Press.

Selection of Comments on Orson Welles

FAVORABLE

Four per cent said they considered Mr. Welles a genius.

I think he's kind of a queer egg, but I think he must be a *genius*.

A *genius*. He is novel and pretty swell.

Can't decide whether he's a madman or a *genius*. Only thing I know is that he's got some imagination.

He's one of these sensationalist types apparently. I wouldn't consider him normal.

He's a *genius*—all right.

Probably the closest to a *genius* in the theater we have had in quite a while.

I think he's queer and I detest him, but I think he's a *genius*.

Eight per cent said they considered Mr. Welles a great actor.

He's a very good actor. He can portray any kind of a part.

I find that he's a very good actor anyway. As an actor he is all right.

UNFAVORABLE

Seven per cent questioned Mr. Welles' sanity.

I don't think he's 'all there.'

Kind of cracked.

I think he's a crackpot with some good ideas.

He's a screwball. He's probably clever.

Belongs in psychopathic ward.

Little bit crazy in his mannerisms and opinions.

After reading of him in *SATURDAY EVENING*

Post I think he must be unbalanced.

Can't stand him. Seems like and looks like a lunatic.

I think he's kind of a goof.

This guy Welles is crazy.

Three per cent said they considered Mr. Welles a bad actor.

Think he hogs the show. I'd hate to have to watch him.

I don't think much of him. Parts he plays and overdoes.

FAVORABLE

I saw him on the stage once and he has quite an attractive personality. He is certainly an actor.
A great emotional actor.

Six per cent recalled Mr. Welles' success with the Mars broadcast.

He had a good play over the radio that time at the end of the world there.
I think he's pretty good to get away with that Mars deal. They should have more of them.
Very good — he scared me to death with that broadcast.
The only thing I know about him is when he scared the world out of its wits.
That anybody that could put it over as good as he did a year ago last Hallowe'en must be somebody.
I heard about the radio program that caused so much trouble and I am anxious to see how he acts.
Boy, he sure had me scared once.

Twenty-three per cent referred to Mr. Welles' radio work in favorable terms.

On the radio damn good. I've never seen the man.
I don't like Orson Welles so hot on the air, but I'd still like to get a good look at him.

Nine per cent said they liked Mr. Welles' voice.

He's got a good voice. I like the way he sounds.
He has a heavenly voice on the radio.
I think he has a very pleasing voice. He isn't monotonous. He puts a lot of expression into what he says.

Five per cent expressed approval of Mr. Welles in general terms.

I think he's superior — one of the best. He puts himself wholeheartedly in his work.
He's wonderful. He may be conceited, but his originality and spark of dramatic talent is in everything he does.
Ain't he versatile?
Like him; think he has something there.
One of the most progressive people in the industry.

Five per cent said they considered Mr. Welles remarkable considering his youth.

I think he's done a lot for his age.
I think he's very bright for his age.
He's a boy genius.
From what I read, he must have remarkable talent to be so young.
He's so young to have achieved such success.
He's so young and so very high up.
Capable but is an upstart who does not warrant position.

UNFAVORABLE

I don't like him. I always shut him off. I think he's too much put on. He acts his part *too good* to suit me.
Highly over-dramatized.
I heard he was a ham.

Five per cent objected to Mr. Welles because his material was generally sensational, fantastic, gruesome, weird, or unreal.

Trying to create something of a sensational nature rather than something true to life.
I don't like him; think he's too far-fetched in his ideas.
I like him pretty well, but his plays are sort of fantastic.
He makes you feel very weird.
I think he is a bluffer.
He must be very clever, but I can't say that I enjoy the *peculiar* stories he picks out.
Too deep.
His things are either spooky or over my head.

Five per cent referred to Mr. Welles' radio work in unfavorable terms.

To tell you the truth I don't like his radio program.
Pompous. I've listened to him on the radio.

One per cent said they disliked Mr. Welles' voice.

Singsong voice — it gets under my skin.
Don't even like his speaking voice.

Nine per cent expressed disapproval of Mr. Welles in general terms.

I don't care much for Orson Welles. A natural dislike, I guess.
He gripes me.
A little of him goes a long way.
I think he stinks in general.
Makes me sick.
Terrible. Don't care for him no how at all.
I really couldn't describe it, but there's something I dislike about him.

Six per cent said they considered Mr. Welles an egotist.

He has a bad case of inflated ego.
I think he has the big head.
He acted kind of big before he attained his heights.
I think he's terribly conceited.
I think he's sort of a show-off.
A person who is an egotistical fool.
I think he's a conceited pup.
His popularity has gone to his head.

FAVORABLE

Four per cent referred to the publicity Mr. Welles has received.

I'm just curious to see him. I read several articles about him.

If everything in SATURDAY EVENING POST is true, I think he must be pretty good.

I think he knew how to get publicity for nothing. Guess he's plenty good though.

Don't know only by reputation. Think he must know the value of publicity.

He's either very smart or clever enough to create a lot of publicity.

Eight per cent remarked that Mr. Welles was different, unusual, original.

He knew he'd have to do something different to sell the mad world so he's done what he did.

I think he is eccentric.

He's unusual; makes things other people don't think of.

He's different. Not charming. Radical.

Miscellaneous.

I think he must be a superb showman.

A smart showman.

Must be pretty good. He is making a lot of money.

Orson Welles couldn't make a picture without its being a financial success; it is already guaranteed.

Thought he was fine in 'The Shadow.'

He's swell. I never missed a time hearing 'The Shadow.'

I never thought much of him until I heard his lecture. He didn't seem so serious and heavy as I had thought.

I have never liked him until recently, but I went to hear his lecture. Now I'd like to see his work.

UNFAVORABLE

Three per cent objected to the publicity Mr. Welles has received.

I think he's just looking for a lot of publicity. He's no actor.

I guess he's pretty well built up; better advertised than he is an actor.

I can't stand him. He's over-publicized himself.

I think he is a publicity hound, but has great talent.

Think he's much ado about nothing.

He likes publicity too much.

Not much. So much noise. He is over-publicized.

Don't like Welles' publicity.

Two per cent took exception to Mr. Welles' beard.

He never shaves. He hasn't got much hair on his chest.

He doesn't look like so much of an actor with a beard.

I think he should shave that beard.

Feel he carries his acting too much into real life; i.e. his beard, cut of hair, etc.

I don't like him. For instance, wearing that beard of his.

Three per cent said they did not like Mr. Welles' appearance.

Never heard him, but his appearance is repulsive.

Everybody jokes about him, but nobody likes him. His looks.—bah!

Hate to look at him.

I like his voice very much, but, oh, that face!

I don't like his looks.

He's too fat.

Do think he's a good actor but has no sex appeal.

He has no glamour.

Not my idea of a heart throb.

NEUTRAL

Four per cent said they liked Mr. Welles on the radio but doubted whether they would want to see him on the screen.

I like him on the radio, but I'm kind of skeptical about him in movies.

Can't imagine him as the type to entertain on the screen.

He's a good radio man, but Hollywood does not need to import radio stars for movies.

I think he should stay on radio. The movies are crowded with character actors already.

Nine per cent said they had never heard of Orson Welles.

Eighteen per cent expressed no opinion.

XIII.

George Sanders

March, 1941.

It is no easy job to measure the marquee value of a comparatively new player whose claim to fame depends mainly on his performances in supporting roles. There are too many theatergoers who know him by sight and by the roles he has played, and not enough who know him by name.

Only 44 per cent of all theatergoers are even aware that "George Sanders" is the name of a movie actor. The remaining 56 per cent cannot identify the name.

When shown a photograph of Sanders, 32 per cent are able to name him. A further 19 per cent recognize him as having appeared in *REBECCA*, *FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT* or *THE SAINT* series, but do not know his name. The remaining 49 per cent are unable to identify the photograph in any way.

These figures indicate that Sanders is only at the beginning of his career as a marquee name. How far he will climb can best be judged by studying audience reactions to his performance in pictures to date. We therefore questioned a representative cross-section of theatergoers on their reactions to his personality in *REBECCA*, *FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT* and *THE SAINT* series.

Scrutiny of the comments recorded verbatim by our interviewers suggests the following conclusions:

- 1) Sanders has become typed as a professional Englishman — "typically English," "real English type," "funny Englishman," etc.
- 2) Nearly everybody who remembers Sanders in *REBECCA* thinks of him as a villain — "a good snake," "the seducing type," "a sneaky guy," "a cad," "ornery," "an admirable heel," "a lovely villain," etc. etc.

We received many comments along these lines: "He's better as a bad man. The Saint really isn't in his line" and

"He can *sneer* better, he's not very good as the detective," etc.

- 3) Theatergoers particularly appreciate Sanders' "studied naturalness": "He's a *natural* actor — no put-on," "He doesn't try to act too smart," "He's calm and natural," "He's just like you'd be in real life — nothing put-on."
- 4) Sanders is only now beginning to gain recognition. After he has achieved 100 per cent 'recognition,' he may or may not continue to rise.
- 5) According to the MOTION PICTURE ALMANAC, Sanders is already thirty-five years old, which is older than 70 per cent of all theatergoers. He is entering the most crowded market. Greater opportunities for success await actors in their late teens and early twenties.

XIV.

Lucille Ball

May, 1941.

Lucille Ball has not yet reached the limit of her power to sell tickets. She still has a long way to go before she is even *known* to all the motion picture public. Up to this time only 58 per cent are aware that "Lucille Ball" is the name of an actress, and only 33 per cent can identify her from a photograph.

She may be well known in Hollywood and among exhibitors, but she needs more pictures and more build-up before the theatergoing public becomes completely aware of her.

Just how far she can climb when she becomes better known is not easy to predict. The special procedure employed in our Dark Horse study does not yet reveal any marked promise on her part. [In the November, 1941, Audit she emerged 144th.]

Perhaps the most encouraging aspect of audience reaction to Lucille Ball is the prevalence of comments to the effect that she is "common," "cheap," "a hussy," "vulgar," "coarse," "the Jean Harlow type," etc.

She is also widely spoken of as "cute," "a sweet dish," "nice shape," "sex appeal," "just a blonde," "home-breaker." Such earthy comments are probably a more healthy sign, in terms of box-office, than the comments we get on certain other personalities — that they are great actresses but high class and high hat.

Like 78 per cent of all motion picture actresses, Lucille Ball is more popular with women than with men. She is most popular with theatergoers under eighteen, which is unusual for an actress of her age. The most plausible reasons for this anomaly are that she looks younger than she is and that she is best known to the very *frequent* theatergoers, who normally become aware of a new star long before the bulk of the theatergoing public gets around to noticing her. These frequent theatergoers are concentrated in the 12-17 age-group.

XV.

Gloria Swanson

August, 1941.

It is not uncommon for a star's personal publicity to get way out ahead of the publicity for her picture. For example, the results of a nation-wide poll conducted during the week ending August 2, 1941, revealed that 25 per cent of all regular theatergoers knew that Gloria Swanson was returning to the screen, while only 13 per cent had heard anything about the picture — *FATHER TAKES A WIFE*. In other words, the publicity for Miss Swanson's return had been more successful than the publicity for the RKO picture in which she was returning.

The case of Gloria Swanson is interesting for another reason: it demonstrates that the picture audience is not a standing army — *it is a moving parade*. Miss Swanson made her last picture in 1934. In the intervening years a majority of her admirers have grown out of going to the movies. Their places at the box-office have been taken by a generation which has never set eyes on Miss Swanson.

In a nation-wide poll conducted during August, 1941, the Institute asked a representative cross-section of theatergoers: "Can you remember ever having seen Gloria Swanson in a movie?"

	Yes	No
	%	%
Ages up to 17 [26% of all admissions]	5	95
Ages 18 to 30 [39% of all admissions]	50	50
Ages 31-up [35% of all admissions]	81	19

Thus, when we were asked to find out in what kind of roles the theatergoing public would like to see Gloria Swanson, we could only report that comparatively few theatergoers knew enough about her to have an opinion. So far as the majority was concerned she was a newcomer to the screen, almost an unknown quantity. The following comments were typical:

"NEVER HEARD OF HER"

Don't know a cock-eyed thing about the madam.
Name isn't familiar.
I don't remember anything about her but the name.
I've just seen pictures of her and she's queer looking.
Never heard of her. I've heard of Mary Pickford though.

"TOO YOUNG TO REMEMBER HER"

Well—I was too young. She never made too much of an impression on me.
I don't know anything about her except I know Mother likes her.
I just heard my mother talking about her. I don't know.
My father thinks she was wonderful. I don't remember her very well.

"TOO OLD FOR A COMEBACK"

I don't think she'd make a good comeback — she's too old. She wouldn't make a hit unless it's in character roles.
She's an old woman, ain't she?
She was all right in her day.
I've read about her. She was good in her time but I don't think she should stage a comeback. She has had her day.
She was a good old actress.
I think she's pretty, but a little old for a comeback.
I'd like to see what she's like after all these years.
It's wonderful — she has kept her age so well.

"A VAMP"

I think she plays the part of a vamp.
She was a vamp and pretty good, I think.
She always was sorta silly.
She was an exotic sort.

Don't like her looks — awfully 'made-up' looking.
 She reminds me of a vampire more than anything else.
 Very affected and somewhat disgusting. She shows her teeth too much.
 Didn't care much for her — she played sirens.

"CLOTHES HORSE"

Very glamorous — wears clothes beautifully.
 Wears slinky clothes.
 She's a clothes horse.

"LIKED HER SINGING"

She's got a nice singing voice.
 I think she used to sing and I liked her singing.
 She sang in the movie I saw. I'd like to see her again — they ought to give her a chance.
 I thought she was a singer.
 I'm sure she sings. I heard her on the radio once.

POOR PUBLIC RELATIONS

I think she ought to be given a better personal reputation.
 I think she's had a bunch of husbands but she's a good actress.

MISCELLANEOUS

I guess she's O.K. She's not much to look at, but I suppose she could play the modern mother type or the gay divorcee type.
 She's very nice — adorable — and I love her. I'm glad she's coming back. [Female, age 44.]
 I have forgotten her. Think we all should.
 She used to be very good, but she is dated now.

That was how things stood before the release of **FATHER TAKES A WIFE.**

XVI.

Paul Muni

October, 1940.

At the conclusion of three weeks' intensive interviewing on properties for Paul Muni, as a complete departure from our usual procedure, seven of our most experienced interviewers were invited to report their general impressions of public opinion in relation to Mr. Muni —

to summarize in their own words the conversations they had been having with farmers and factory workers, housewives and stenographers.

The substance of their reports boils down to this: "Muni's name is associated with serious dramatic acting. Unfortunately it happens that at this point in the world's history rather few people want to see anything deep or serious. At this time, the commodity purveyed by Muni is at a discount."

Further light on the state of public opinion in relation to Muni was shed by an inspection of the reactions obtained when we asked theatergoers this question: "What do you think of Paul Muni?" Typical were the following replies:

When I'm in the mood for deep thought, I see him.

Anything he played in would be very educational.

He always plays a part in sort of deep pictures — too deep for me.

I guess he's a good actor but to me he's just a little too dead pan.

He should take his make-up off and do something realistic, American and contemporary.

He is good, but I would like to see him act American parts more.

I wouldn't go out of my way to see his pictures — he's too serious.

I think he's a wonderful actor but I don't care so much for the parts he usually takes. I prefer sophisticated comedies.

I go to movies to laugh! I don't like to sit and worry about whether he's gonna die or not.

I don't like Paul Muni. I like fellers like James Cagney and Clark Gable, them rough and ready fellers.

He's a damn good actor but personally I just prefer lighter vein to my entertainment.

The problem is to find a vehicle which not only offers scope for Muni's acting genius, but one which also possesses sufficient *mass* appeal to recapture the millions who have been frightened off by his previous pictures.

XVII.

Ronald Colman

December, 1940.

It is illuminating to study the actual *words* used most frequently by the public in discussing Ronald Colman with our interviewers. They are:

- 1) Adventure, adventurer, adventurous, etc.
- 2) Soldier, soldier of fortune, etc.
- 3) Serious
- 4) Gentleman

LUCKY PARTNERS did not accord with this popular formula for a Colman picture. Objections to casting him in this picture consisted of such reactions as: "I can't imagine Colman being witty; he's more serious"; "He's too much of a gentleman" and "He's too dignified."

In the case of MY LIFE WITH CAROLINE we received a few scattered comments to the effect that Colman was too old for such a romantic role: "I like the story but not Grandpa Colman."

Our interviewers asked: "Would you rather see Ronald Colman in light, romantic comedies like LUCKY PARTNERS and MY LIFE WITH CAROLINE, or do you prefer to see him in other types of movies?"

	%
Light Comedies	24
Other Types	60
No Preference	16

When asked in *what* other types of movies they preferred to see Colman, a majority of respondents replied in terms of "serious" and "adventure," and the specific picture referred to most frequently was LOST HORIZON.

We have pre-tested the audience reactions to Ronald Colman in six different properties. The results of these tests were as follows:

Rank

1. Colman in BRAZILIAN ADVENTURE [See pages 55 and 64].
2. Colman in THE GREAT ICE [See page 55].
3. Colman in LAWRENCE OF ARABIA [See page 76].
4. Colman in LUCKY PARTNERS.
5. Colman in MY LIFE WITH CAROLINE [See page 86].
6. Colman in THE SWAN.

XVIII.

Harold Lloyd

December, 1940.

The marquee value of a player who has been off the screen for a long time is an intangible which is as difficult to measure as it is to define. We can measure the extent of public interest in Harold Lloyd *as of today*, but we cannot predict how much this interest will be increased by the publicity attendant upon a new picture. It would depend, to a far greater extent than in the case of a current star, on the quantity and quality of that publicity.

Despite the difficulties of the problem, we were able to obtain certain information which was useful in guiding RKO policy in regard to Mr. Lloyd.

- 1) His *recognition* value is high. More than 80 per cent of theatergoers identify him correctly. Far more persons think of him as an actor than name him as a producer.
- 2) As of today his marquee value is not great. He does not rank among the first hundred. He is particularly weak with young people, many of whom have never seen him on the screen. But this disadvantage is partially offset by the fact that Lloyd's type of comedy is found to be more popular with young people than with any other segment of the population.

These findings pointed to the conclusion that, in formulating a policy concerning Mr. Lloyd, he should be regarded more or less as a new star. As in the case of all new stars, anything but a *low budget* picture would have been highly speculative. It *might* have paid big dividends, but we were unable to obtain any positive indication that it would have done so.

If RKO should decide to sponsor a new Harold Lloyd picture, there are two precautions which would minimize the risk:

- 1) Earmark an abnormally large proportion of the total investment for publicity and advertising, in an attempt to emulate Chaplin's success in reviving his own

marquee value before the release of *THE GREAT DICTATOR*.

- 2) Insist on a story which is high in audience acceptance value, and one which lends itself naturally to pre-release publicity.

XIX.

Directors

October, 1941.

Garson Kanin said recently: "The public hears little and cares less about a director."

In October, 1941, we showed theatergoers a roster of nineteen directors, asking these questions: 1) "Are there any on this list that you have heard of before?" and 2) "Are there any on this list whose pictures you particularly like?"

Results were as follows:

	<i>Heard of Before</i>	<i>Particularly Like</i>
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
Cecil B. De Mille	75*	53*
Frank Capra	62	44
Alfred Hitchcock	31	14
John Ford	35	13
W. S. Van Dyke	45	9
Ernst Lubitsch	33	8
Howard Hawks	17	7
Victor Fleming	23	4
Garson Kanin	10	4
Gregory La Cava	15	3
George Cukor	23	3
Frank Borzage	17	3
Sam Wood	23	3
Lewis Milestone	18	2
Rouben Mamoulian	13	2
Anatole Litvak	21	2
Michael Curtiz	11	1
William Dieterle	8	1
Leo McCarey	8	1

* Mr. De Mille's weekly appearance before a radio audience of 27,000,000 may have something to do with his emergence at the top.

One year before, we had found that 7 per cent could identify Mr. Kanin as a director, and 2 per cent could name one or more of his pictures. The picture mentioned most frequently was **THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WANTED** — probably because Mr. Kanin had been included so conspicuously in the *LIFE* feature on that picture.

Here is the comparable information on four other directors:

	COULD NAME ONE OR MORE PICTURES %	PICTURES NAMED MOST FREQUENTLY
FRANK CAPRA	27	1. LOST HORIZON 2. IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT 3. MR. SMITH 4. MR. DEEDS 5. YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU
ALFRED HITCHCOCK	8	1. REBECCA 2. FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT 3. { 39 STEPS LADY VANISHES JAMAICA INN
JOHN FORD	2	1. INFORMER 2. GRAPES OF WRATH 3. STAGECOACH
LEWIS MILESTONE	1	1. ALL QUIET 2. OF MICE AND MEN

XX.

News Commentators

January, 1941.

When it was announced that Columbia would distribute some animated cartoons dealing with current events and that Raymond Gram Swing would be the commentator, we guessed that, in the event of the Columbia series proving successful, RKO would be interested in developing a similar series of its own. We therefore exposed a list of fourteen of the best-known commentators to a representative cross-section of theatergoers and asked them whether they would "especially enjoy seeing any of these people give a short talk in the movies."

The final ranking was as follows:

1. Lowell Thomas
2. Walter Winchell
3. Dorothy Thompson
4. H. V. Kaltenborn
5. Elmer Davis
6. { Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt
Edwin C. Hill
8. Raymond Gram Swing
9. Westbrook Pegler
10. Walter Lippmann
11. { General Hugh Johnson
Pearson and Allen
Paul Sullivan
Gabriel Heatter

Winchell and Lowell Thomas emerged almost equal at the top, both receiving 50 per cent more votes than Dorothy Thompson, who ranked third.

XXI.

Band Leaders

February, 1941.

The Institute used its Audit procedure to measure the marquee value of fifty-nine band leaders. The following emerged as the ten most popular:

1. Kay Kyser*
2. Tommy Dorsey
3. Paul Whiteman
4. Glenn Miller
5. Guy Lombardo
6. Fred Waring
7. Wayne King
8. Eddie Duchin
9. Rudy Vallee
10. Horace Heidt

Kay Kyser received 50 per cent more votes than Tommy Dorsey, his nearest competitor.

If the results of this study do not agree with other polls on the popularity of band leaders, the explanation lies in the fact that such polls are generally limited to swing fans, whereas the persons interviewed by the Institute represent a cross-section of the entire motion picture audience.

* At this time Kyser ranked 52nd in the Continuing Audit of motion picture personalities.

CHAPTER III

Audience Acceptance Value of Stories

DURING the last two years, the Institute has tested more than three hundred story ideas. Only twenty-one emerged high enough to recommend for purchase.

In our opinion it will always be necessary to test a hundred stories in order to find six good ones. If you accept this high ratio as normal and inevitable, you will not be too disappointed when any one of your own pet ideas fails to make the grade.

But if you never test a story until you have committed yourself to the proposition that it is a *great* story, then it hurts when the poll goes against you, and you find yourself refusing to accept the verdict of the poll. We know, because that is the way we ourselves used to feel when our early ideas kept laying promissory eggs.

II.

What is the dollars-and-cents value of this story-testing service? It is both positive and negative. *Positive* when the Institute, having found a story with guaranteed acceptance value, points the way to a profitable picture. *Negative* when the Institute, having certified that a story would *not* be popular, saves the studio from a financial loss.

In pre-testing stories, the procedure employed is, briefly, as follows:

- 1) Your story department [New York or the coast] sends the story to Princeton, with a short synopsis and a long synopsis [by telegram in a 'hot situation'].
- 2) These synopses are revised by the Institute so as to insure that the uneducated theatergoer will experience no difficulty in understanding them.

- 3) They are then sent out to interviewers all over the country, who expose them to a carefully assigned cross-section of theatergoers in each community.
- 4) These theatergoers are questioned as to their reactions.
- 5) Their comments are recorded *verbatim* — dialect, blasphemy and all. Paraphrasing is not permitted.
- 6) The ballots are air-mailed back to Princeton, answers to questions are coded, punched on I.B.M. cards, sorted by machine [for speed], percentaged and analyzed by age-groups, by sex, by geographical region, by income-groups and by size of community.
- 7) The comments are transcribed and, together with the tabulations, are scrutinized by the head of the Institute's story department.
- 8) The report is written and air-mailed to Hollywood fourteen days after the synopsis arrives in Princeton. *In special hot situations the results can be telegraphed to Hollywood in forty-eight hours.*

In writing reports it is our duty to be cautious and conservative. As a fact-finding organization, our job is to look for every possible snag, to find out the *worst* before the money is spent. Occasionally a prediction of disaster may turn out to be unduly pessimistic, but such cases provide no argument for more reckless navigation in the future.

III.

Let us outline thirteen typical situations — all more or less imaginary — in which you can employ the story testing facilities of the Institute to good advantage:

- 1) A producer has been trying to sell you the idea of a picture based on the life of EDDIE RICKENBACKER. You have your own opinion of this idea, but you recall that your opinions have once or twice proved mistaken. So you take the precaution of telephoning the Institute and putting

this story idea in the hopper. In particular, you want to know how many ticket-buyers see propaganda in the subject, how many are already familiar with the story of RICKENBACKER and to what extent the story's acceptance value varies by geographical region.

- 2) Your company owns a stage play for which it paid more than \$200,000. To produce it as a picture would cost another \$650,000. Do enough people react favorably to justify this investment, or would the company do better to take its loss? Put the problem up to the ticket-buying public.
- 3) Your company has a claim on Cary Grant for one picture, and the story department has assembled a dozen possible stories for him. Send these stories to the Institute and have them ranked in order of their audience acceptance value.
- 4) Over the years your company has accumulated scores of unproduced originals, novels, plays, magazine stories, etc., which are gathering dust on the shelf. Send them all to the Institute for evaluation by the theatergoing public. There *might* be a gold-mine among them.
- 5) Somebody has suggested re-making one of your company's old successes, but you question whether the factors which made it popular in 1929 enjoy the same appeal in 1941. So you decide to verify your judgment by having the Institute conduct a poll.
- 6) A brilliant young producer on your lot has conceived an idea which is so revolutionary that your experience includes no points of reference which would enable you to pass judgment on it. You dare not spend \$500,000 to find out how good the idea is. Equally, you dare not ignore it. So you decide to get some guidance from the ultimate judge — John Q. Citizen.
- 7) The bidding on the next Book-of-the-Month will soon begin; you want the book but you have no idea how much

you ought to offer for it. You know the story is good, but you cannot be sure *how* good. It would be worth holding off for forty-eight hours while the Institute rushes a poll — even if there is a risk that another studio will get the story before the results of your poll arrive. The risk of paying too much for a poor story is at least as great as the risk of losing a good one.

- 8) Along comes a package deal which includes a star you have been seeking for a long time. But the story in the package looks poor. On the horns of this dilemma you buy a brief option, suspending your decision until you have obtained a report from the Institute.
- 9) A famous independent producer says you can distribute his forthcoming picture. You need it to sell your next block of five, but before agreeing to the terms he has proposed, you decide to find out just exactly how good the independent's picture looks to the ticket-buyers.
- 10) A stockholder is on fire with enthusiasm for a story which you recognize as a louse, but you cannot prove it. An impartial survey by the Institute can save the situation.
- 11) You are having story trouble with your biggest star — your opinion against her agent's. Submit the problem to the independent arbitrage of the ticket-buyers.
- 12) For fifteen years you have had a secret longing to make a picture which no sane man would dream of making — *Ivanhoe*, *Sergeant York*, *Juno and the Paycock*, *Joan of Arc*, *Stalin*, or some other unorthodox idea. Now you can satisfy your curiosity without risking a nickel. Expose your pet dream to a cross-section of the people who would actually decide its fate at the box-office.
- 13) It has been suggested that your company should back a Broadway play, with a view to making it as a picture at a later date. The question in your mind is — *would this play make a popular picture?* The Institute is in a position to help you find the answer.

It is no longer necessary to spend \$500,000 to find out how much the public likes your ideas. Now you can get the answer for less than one per cent of that sum. You can hold your sneak previews before your pictures are photographed.

IV.

It has been found that accurate estimates of audience acceptance value can be obtained by employing synopses of about fifty words. The most feasible explanation of this astonishing fact is that the average theatergoer, when he actually comes to select his pictures, knows only a few general facts about them — facts which could easily be summarized in fifty words. [The objective in all audience research is to create a situation which approximates as closely as possible to the normal circumstances in which people decide whether or not to see a picture.] Our experience suggests that the average theatergoer subconsciously endorses the opinion of the producer who observed that "If it is a good story, you can tell it to me in three sentences."

At the same time, it must be said that long synopses also have their place in audience research. They do not always yield a reliable statistical estimate of acceptance value, but they are useful in qualitative analyses of specific elements in the story.

It is sometimes argued that our synopses fail to convey the 'different' qualities of the stories we are testing. That criticism is no doubt valid, but it is irrelevant, for the following reason: As previously pointed out, theatergoers have a disconcerting habit of reducing every picture to its basic elements and deciding *pro* or *con* accordingly. If you stop men and women on their way into theaters and question them on the factors which caused them to select that particular picture, you will be surprised to find how *crudely* they have appraised the picture of their choice.

It is generally the basic facts about a motion picture which decide its box-office expectancy — cast, subject, title and publicity penetration. This does not imply that the contributions of the writer, the director and the crew are not important. It goes without saying that they are, of course. But the ordinary ticket-buyer is not competent to appraise these technical factors.

Take the example of SAMUEL GOMPERS. The Institute tested that idea, using three different treatments. There was only a small difference in results. *Whatever* the treatment, the majority of ticket-buyers showed little interest in seeing a picture about GOMPERS.

It is surprising how very seldom any producer succeeds in making a box-office success out of a story which is intrinsically without interest to the theatergoing public. Our records demonstrate the prime importance of starting with a basic idea which is acceptable to the public. Some producers think they can make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. It does not often happen.

CHAPTER IV

Results of Story Tests

IN THE FOLLOWING pages we print a condensed summary of the results obtained on 105 out of more than three hundred stories tested by the Institute during the last two years. Of these, approximately one-third were submitted by RKO, the balance being tested on the Institute's own initiative.

The Institute arbitrarily divides stories into three main classes:

FIRST CLASS: Those whose audience acceptance value is *above average*. To qualify for inclusion in this class a story must receive a vote of 60 per cent or more.

SECOND CLASS: Those whose acceptance value is *average*. To qualify for inclusion in this class a story must receive a vote between 50 and 60 per cent.

THIRD CLASS: Those whose acceptance value is *below average*. All stories which receive a vote lower than 50 per cent belong in this class.

With a First Class story you can — perhaps — get along without a star. With a strong star and high publicity penetration you can get by with a Second Class story. But when you find yourself saddled with Third Class stories and no stars, there is little, if any, chance of your pictures being successful.

Condensed Report on 105 Story Tests

FIRST CLASS

These are the refined distillate, the crème de la crème, A-1 at Lloyds, Aa A-1 at Dun & Bradstreet. Such stories are few and far between.

	<i>Source</i>	<i>Acceptance Value %</i>
WILL ROGERS "Uncle Clem's Boy" Book by Mrs. Will Rogers	ARI	75
LOU GEHRIG	RKO	69
FLIGHT SURGEON Newspaper serial by Cameron Rogers & H. E. Halland	ARI	69
ARMY SURGEON Original by ARI	ARI	66
EAST FROM HALIFAX Various magazine articles	ARI	66
LAWYER FOR THE DEFENSE "Clarence Darrow For the Defense" Book by Irving Stone	ARI	66
TELEVISION TOWN Original by ARI	ARI	65
CLAUDIA Play by Rose Franken Broadway, 1941	ARI	65
✓ THE MAYO BROTHERS Original by ARI	ARI	64
THE PASSIONATE WITCH Posthumous novel by Thorne Smith	ARI	64
THE WIDOW WORE A BLACK EYE Original by Ross & Leslie	RKO	63
CHINA SKY Novel by Pearl Buck	ARI	63
CONNECTICUT YANKEE AT KING ARTHUR'S COURT Classic by Samuel Clemens Made in 1921 and 1931	ARI	62

These results represent the acceptance value of the stories only, *at the time when the survey was made*, without regard to cast or publicity penetration.

	Source	Acceptance Value %
THE DESERT SONG Operetta by Romberg Made in 1929	ARI	61
RICKENBACKER	RKO	61 *
YES, YES YVETTE Story by F. S. Isham Broadway musical in 1927	ARI	61
JOAN OF PARIS Original by Thierry & Kessels	RKO	60
THE GREAT ICE Original by ARI Admiral Peary's quest for the North Pole	ARI	60
OUT OF THE NIGHT Best-seller by Jan Valtin	ARI	60
ATTACK ALARM Serial by Hammond Innes SATURDAY EVENING POST, 1941	ARI	60
BRAZILIAN ADVENTURE Original by ARI, using Peter Fleming's title	ARI	60

* After our study of the audience acceptance value of RICKENBACKER [September, 1941] we took a poll to determine what percentage of the theatergoing public knows who Rickenbacker is. Here are the results, with the same information on Jack Dempsey and three other famous personalities, for comparison:

	% Correctly Identifying
Jack Dempsey	96
Will Rogers	92
Lou Gehrig	78
Eddie Rickenbacker	60

SECOND CLASS

THE SILVER SPOON Novel by C. B. Kelland	ARI	58
ALOHA MEANS GOODBYE Serial by Robert Carson, SATURDAY EVENING POST, 1941	ARI	58

These results represent the acceptance value of the stories only, *at the time when the survey was made*, without regard to cast or publicity penetration.

	Source	Acceptance Value %
WAR GIRL "True" serial edited by Keith Ayling in LIBERTY, 1941	ARI	58
THE MAGNIFICENT AMBERSONS Novel by Booth Tarkington	RKO	58
MONEY TO BURN Original by ARI, based on an incident reported in the press	ARI	57
FRENCHMAN'S CREEK Best-seller by Daphne du Maurier	RKO	57
GENTLEMAN FROM INDIANA Novel by Booth Tarkington	ARI	57
TITANIC Novel by Robert Prechtl	ARI	57
PASSAGE FROM BORDEAUX Original by Budd Schulberg	RKO	56
KEYS OF THE KINGDOM Novel by A. J. Cronin	ARI	56
THE WITCH OF WALL STREET Book by Boyden Sparkes & Samuel Moore Life of Hetty Green	ARI	56
OLIVER TWIST Classic by Charles Dickens	ARI	56
KEEPER OF THE FLAME Novel by I. A. R. Wylie	RKO	55
BIG FAMILY Novel by Bellamy Partridge	RKO	55
YOUNG DEMPSEY Original by ARI, about the boxer	ARI	55
REMARRYING PETE Story by Whitfield Cook in REDBOOK, 1941	ARI	54
THE STUDENT PRINCE Operetta by Sigmund Romberg Made in 1927	ARI	54

These results represent the acceptance value of the stories only, *at the time when the survey was made*, without regard to cast or publicity penetration.

	Source	Acceptance Value %
WAIKIKI AND BACK Story by Robert Carson in LADIES HOME JOURNAL, 1941	ARI	54
FARAWAY ISLAND Novel by J. B. Priestley	ARI	53
PICKWICK PAPERS Classic by Charles Dickens	RKO	53
VALLEY OF THE SUN Novel by C. B. Kelland	RKO	51
SISTER CARRIE Novel by Theodore Dreiser	RKO	51
A THOUSAND DOLLARS Original by ARI	ARI	51
PRIVATE LIFE OF HELEN OF TROY Novel by John Erskine, made in 1927	ARI	51
MAUDIE Serial by the Lorimers LADIES HOME JOURNAL	ARI	51
SNOW GOOSE Short Story by Paul Gallico	RKO	51
LONA HENRY Novel by Polan Banks	RKO	51
THE DOCTOR FINDS HER MAN Original by ARI	ARI	50
BRIDES GO ON FOREVER Original by Seff & Leaf, about GALLUP POLL	RKO	50
SKI FOR TWO Original by ARI	ARI	50
THE LAST MILE Play by John Wexley Broadway, 1929 Made in 1932	RKO	50

These results represent the acceptance value of the stories only, at the time when the survey was made, without regard to cast or publicity penetration.

	Source	Acceptance Value %
THE CHICAGO METHOD Original by George Murphy	RKO	50
HURRAY I'M FIRED Original by ARI	ARI	50
OCCUPATION: WIDOW Serial by William C. White, COLLIER's, 1940	ARI	50
KID TINSEL Serial by O. R. Cohen COLLIER's, 1940	ARI	50

THIRD CLASS

JOURNEY INTO FEAR Novel by Eric Ambler	RKO	49
WEEKEND FOR THREE Original by Budd Schulberg	RKO	49
SONS Novel by Pearl Buck	ARI	49
MARGIN FOR ERROR Play by Clare Boothe Broadway, 1940	RKO	49
A SODA FOR CYRIL Original by ARI about English refugee children	ARI	48
MOBY DICK Classic by Herman Melville Made in 1930	ARI	48
MR. PINKIE Screen play by Bromfield & van Druten	RKO	48
THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER Short Story by Stephen Vincent Benét	RKO	48
NO MORE GAS Novel by Nordhoff & Hall	RKO	48

These results represent the acceptance value of the stories only, *at the time when the survey was made*, without regard to cast or publicity penetration.

	Source	Acceptance Value %
HOUDINI Original by ARI about the magician	ARI	47
WHO WALK ALONE Novel by Perry Burgess	ARI	47
SILAS MARNER Classic by George Eliot	University of Ohio	47
JOHNNY BELINDA Play by Elmer Harris, Broadway, 1940	RKO	47
OUT OF THE FRYING PAN Play by Francis Swann Broadway, 1941	ARI	47
MR. ZERO Based on life of Urbain Ledoux	RKO	46
LORNA DOONE Classic by Blackmore Made in 1923	University of Ohio	46
THE COWARD Original by Alfred Max	ARI	46
DUST IN THE AFTERNOON Serial by Holmes Alexander in the SATURDAY EVENING POST, 1940	ARI	46
HIGH IRON Short Story by Harry Bedwell in the SATURDAY EVENING POST, 1940, about railroading	ARI	45
GREENMANTLE Novel by John Buchan	ARI	45
SAMUEL GOMPERS	RKO	45
JUNIOR MISS Book by Sally Benson	ARI	45
LADY FROM SANTA CLARA Story by Thomas Rourke COLLIER'S, 1941	ARI	44

These results represent the acceptance value of the stories only, at the time when the survey was made, without regard to cast or publicity penetration.

	Source	Acceptance Value %
THE O'HIGGINS OF CHILE Original by ARI	ARI	43
MODERN POMPADOUR "True" serial by Frederick L. Collins, LIBERTY, 1941, about Magda Lupescu	ARI	43
GRAND CENTRAL MARKET Original by Vicki Baum	RKO	43
WOMEN ARE POISON Original by Fay & Michael Kanin	RKO	42
BITTER CREEK Novel by James Boyd	RKO	42
THE RED PONY Short story by John Steinbeck	RKO	42
CARMEN Opera by Bizet	—	42
CABIN IN THE SKY Negro musical by Lynn Root Broadway, 1940	ARI	41
EXCURSION Play by Victor Wolfson Broadway, 1936	ARI	41
YOU'RE ONLY YOUNG TWICE Original by ARI, using Doree Smedly's title	ARI	40
HARMONY COLONY Original by ARI	ARI	40
RIVER FEUD Story by James Street, SATURDAY EVENING POST, 1940	ARI	40
PRESTER JOHN Novel by John Buchan	ARI	40
MR. LITTLEJOHN Novel by Martin Flavin	ARI	39
MUSIC CAMP Original by ARI	ARI	39

These results represent the acceptance value of the stories only, *at the time when the survey was made*, without regard to cast or publicity penetration.

	Source	Acceptance Value %
REBEL EDITOR	ARI	38
Original by ARI about Memphis editor who defied Yankees in Civil War		
THIS ABOVE ALL	ARI	37
Best-seller by Eric Knight, 1941		
THE AMISHMAN	ARI	37
Original by ARI		
THEATRE	ARI	36
Novel by Somerset Maugham		
HOLY SUBURB	ARI	35
Novel by Elizabeth Atkins, 1941		
WATER GYPSIES	RKO	34
Novel by A. P. Herbert		
THE GILDED PHEASANT	RKO	33
Short Story by Stephen Morehouse Avery		
MADAME BOVARY	ARI	31
Novel by Flaubert		
MARRIAGE MEDDLERS	RKO	31
Newspaper serial by Adele Garrison		
R.U.R.	RKO	31
Play by Karel Capek		
HE'S MY BABY	ARI	30
Short Story by Margaret Eyssen McCALL's, 1941		

These results represent the acceptance value of the stories only, *at the time when the survey was made*, without regard to cast or publicity penetration.

Digest of Story Reports

IN THE FOLLOWING pages you will find a digest of story reports selected from the Institute's files and arranged in alphabetical order. These reports contain many repetitions. The careful reader will soon realize that what applies in the case of one story does not necessarily apply in the case of another. Each property has been investigated as a single entity and appraised, by the public, on its individual merits.

NOTE

Each of these reports must be interpreted against the background of the date of the survey. Every one of them was printed before the outbreak of war. We strongly urge that any story which is in any way related to war should be re-tested and appraised anew in the light of the current situation.

ATTACK ALARM

November, 1941.

In a nation-wide test the Institute exposed ATTACK ALARM, serial by Hammond Innes in the SATURDAY EVENING POST, to a representative cross-section of the theatergoing public. It emerged with a vote of 60 per cent, which places it just inside the First Class.

An unusual feature of the results was that virtually all respondents who had caught the story in the POST voted for it as a picture. Said a New York lawyer: *"I read the story and I know it from A to Z. I couldn't wait until the next issue of the SATURDAY EVENING POST came out. Boy, will I see it!"* Likewise a 20-year-old pastry-baker: *"I read the story. It's very, very good."*

ATTACK ALARM is strongest with the younger age-groups and the poorer income levels. Incidentally it is with these segments of the ticket-buying public that RKO pictures have been conspicuously below the industry average during the last two years.

The box-office performance of four recent pictures provides additional evidence as to the present audience acceptance of stories of this type: A YANK IN THE R.A.F., DIVE BOMBER, SERGEANT YORK and I WANTED WINGS.

THE BAND PLAYED ON

February, 1941.

In a series of three nation-wide surveys we exposed THE BAND PLAYED ON to representative cross-sections of theatergoers. We find that the story has an average audience acceptance value, *provided it is treated in low-brow jitter-bug style.*

So far as we have been able to detect, serious interest in the origins and historical development of swing is rare. The ordinary boys and girls who buy tickets to hear Benny Goodman and Kay Kyser do not seem to care a button about the ancestry of their music. The majority attitude is purely naive.

An examination of the comments recorded by our interviewers shows that *THE BAND PLAYED ON* appeals strongly to these light-hearted youngsters:

"I really like hot swing."

"I'm a jitter-bug. I like anything about swing."

"Like to hear that hot trombone player."

"Like musicals — hot ones — not BITTER SWEET kind."

"I'm crazy about dancing and like a good dance band."

There are indications that any kind of high-brow treatment would alienate this mass market of innocent young seekers after entertainment. In this connection the following comment was significant: "The music is swing and I like that — *but it sounds just like a 'dry' picture.*

We want to be sure that RKO fully comprehends the implication of our findings on this picture. Frankly, we are afraid of what might happen at the box-office if Mr. Dieterle were to make *THE BAND PLAYED ON* as Valentine Davies wrote it — a semi-serious saga on the historical development of jazz.

BRAZILIAN ADVENTURE

October, 1941.

In this report we draw attention to yet another theme which interests the ticket-buying public. It is the story of an air pilot, forced down in the jungle of Brazil. He comes across a community of Americans who have been isolated there for thirty years, hundreds of miles from civilization. Falling in love with one of the girls, he takes her back with him to the United States, but comes to realize that life has more to offer with the lost community. Together they renounce the world and return to the jungle. [The title *BRAZILIAN ADVENTURE* was borrowed from Peter Fleming's book describing his search for Colonel Fawcett.]

This story, which obviously has much in common with *LOST HORIZON*, and perhaps a little in common with Hudson's *GREEN MANSIONS*, received a vote of 60 per cent, thus qualifying for inclusion in the First Class. Of the more than three hundred stories tested by the Institute during the last two years, only sixteen have received more votes than *BRAZILIAN ADVENTURE*.

While possessing better than average appeal to women, BRAZILIAN ADVENTURE is outstandingly strong with male theatergoers — who account for almost exactly *half* the box-office dollar. The story is equally attractive to all ages, to all income levels and to all sizes of community.

CARMEN

October, 1941.

Mr. Friedrich Feher has a plan for using the Metropolitan Opera Company to make films of famous operas at a cost below \$300,000, including the services of the Metropolitan's most famous stars. He figures that NBC's Saturday afternoon broadcasts have created a large new market for opera; that he would make the picture in English; and that the low budgets involved would make it possible to sell them as second features.

The results of a survey just completed by the Institute indicate that a film of CARMEN [reputedly the most popular of all operas] would not be popular. Rarely have we encountered such categorical opposition to any idea.

Approximately half the persons interviewed said they didn't care for opera — and said so in no uncertain terms. "It would bore me to death," said the owner of a dry goods store. "I can't stand them squawkers," was the reaction of a laundry driver.

The idea seems to step on the inferiority feelings of a large segment of the theatergoing public. "I don't like that high tone stuff — I'm not educated enough for that," said a filling station attendant.

Analysis of our findings identify the typical opera addict as a wealthy, middle-aged-to-elderly woman living in a large city.

The comments reveal that the property, under that title, cannot tap any market broader than the opera market. To the public at large CARMEN means only one thing — opera, squawkers and boredom; only a very few respondents can get over that hurdle and take any interest in the story for its own sake.

CHINA SKY

October, 1941.

On May 8, 1941, the Institute drew attention to CHINA SKY, a novel by Pearl Buck, which was then being serialized in COLLIER's. It transpired that RKO had already considered this story, judging it "fairly good though not outstanding." However, further tests by the Institute indicated that the audience acceptance value of CHINA SKY was exceptionally strong, and early in September it was announced that RKO had purchased the story.

To make quite sure that our original estimate was not exaggerated we conducted a further series of tests, the results of which confirm that CHINA SKY belongs in the select band of stories which, given adequate publicity penetration, could make successful A pictures even without a major marquee name. Since March, 1940, only twenty-one stories have emerged in this First Class — twenty-one out of the more than three hundred tested by the Institute.

These twenty-one leaders are:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--|
| 1. WILL ROGERS | 11. THE WIDOW WORE A BLACK EYE |
| 2. LOU GEHRIG | 12. CHINA SKY |
| 3. FLIGHT SURGEON | 13. CONNECTICUT YANKEE AT
KING ARTHUR'S COURT |
| 4. ARMY SURGEON | 14. YES, YES, YVETTE |
| 5. EAST FROM HALIFAX | 15. THE DESERT SONG |
| 6. LAWYER FOR THE DEFENSE | 16. RICKENBACKER |
| 7. TELEVISION TOWN | 17. JOAN OF PARIS |
| 8. CLAUDIA | 18. THE GREAT ICE |
| 9. THE PASSIONATE WITCH | 19. OUT OF THE NIGHT |
| 10. THE MAYO BROTHERS | 20. ATTACK ALARM |
| | 21. BRAZILIAN ADVENTURE |

CHINA SKY is one of those all too rare properties which is all things to all ticket-buyers. Females like its romance; males like its action; children like its airplanes. And hospitals and doctors enjoy a large and steady market. The story is equally strong with all income-groups and in every size of community.

We find that the mention of Pearl Buck increases the picture's box-office expectancy by 7 per cent, which is not surprising when you recall

that in a nation-wide survey conducted three years ago we found that she ranked among the ten most popular authors in the country.*

The reader may recall that in a series of polls conducted earlier this year we found that of all Muni's previous pictures the one most favorably remembered by the public was *THE GOOD EARTH*. We now find that teaming Muni with Rainer elicits a stream of comments along these lines: "I saw *THE GOOD EARTH* and they played so good together."

THE GOOD EARTH was among the fourteen highest grossers of 1937.

We suggest seeking both Muni and Rainer for this picture on the assumption that Rainer can now be hired at a very modest figure; our report on *THE MARQUEE VALUE OF TEAMS* demonstrates that it is seldom good business to use two major stars in one picture. In this instance, however, there seems to be a special case for adding Rainer — to exploit the demand for another Buck-Muni-Rainer picture. Without Rainer the association might not be so obvious.

THE CORN IS GREEN

March, 1941.

"The fabulous prices paid for Manhattan stage properties, many of which are considered to be of questionable value to the screen, has aroused suspicion in some quarters that Hollywood is the victim of Broadway log-rolling. Fortunes have been spent for material of such dubious film quality that had the same stories been offered as originals for \$1,250 they would have been rejected." — Douglas Churchill in the *NEW YORK TIMES*.

Our diagnosis is that this property is an extremely risky bet. It is always possible that an accomplished producer could turn it into a screen masterpiece. But the odds seem to be stacked heavily against the man who is handed this assignment.

On the part of the minority who are enthusiastic about *THE CORN IS GREEN*, we find an unusually articulate demand to see Ethel Barrymore in the picture:

"I'd like to see this if you could get Ethel Barrymore to play in it."

"Wouldn't see it without Ethel Barrymore."

* The first ten were Zane Grey, Kathleen Norris, John Steinbeck, Lloyd Douglas, Mark Twain, Charles Dickens, Margaret Mitchell, Pearl Buck, Louis Bromfield and A. J. Cronin — in that order.

If it were possible to purchase *THE CORN IS GREEN* for a very low figure, and to make the picture on a very modest budget, then it would be safe to proceed, on the assumption that the picture would find favor with the limited few. But the dizzy prices required to purchase other Broadway plays in recent months suggests that *THE CORN IS GREEN* is not to be thought of in terms of anything but a rather considerable budget.

The classic example of a successful stage play which failed to appeal to motion picture audiences was *ABE LINCOLN IN ILLINOIS*. The motion picture audience is *broader-based* than the legitimate theater audience. A play can succeed on Broadway or Shaftsbury Avenue provided it appeals to the upper income levels, but the present organization of motion picture distribution demands that any story which is to succeed on the screen must appeal to *all* income levels.

This Emlyn Williams play is a typical case in point. We find that it is fairly strong with persons in the upper income-groups, but markedly weak with the great mass of ordinary theatergoers.

THE CORN IS GREEN possesses that kind of realism which appeals to those who deplore the frivolous escapism of so much Hollywood product. It is the custom of these people to cite such foreign pictures as *HARVEST* and *THE BAKER'S WIFE* as examples of the realism which audiences ought to want. Our studies show that French pictures appeal to these sophisticated critics *because they actually represent the utmost in escape to them*. Persons who live in the atmosphere of sophisticated city life are particularly vulnerable to rustic 'realism.'

THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER

September, 1940.

The Stephen Vincent Benét property was subjected to a battery of different tests, with and without casts. The results of these tests add up to the fact that, despite the lavish praise which has been heaped on the story by William Lyon Phelps and other distinguished critics, *it lacks interest for the theatergoing public*.

The picture is markedly weak with women, with children under eighteen years of age and with the lower income levels. Such appeal as it does possess is predominantly to persons over thirty-one in the upper

income brackets, and to that tiny segment of the population which honestly likes educational pictures.

Although Mr. Dieterle promised that "broad strokes of humor will highlight the story throughout," and although we passed on this assurance to the public, the majority reaction was that the basic elements of the picture are not such as would make for comedy.

If Hollywood producers could be persuaded to spend one week every year in the company of our interviewers, exposing their production plans to coal miners and steel workers, shopgirls and school children, plumbers and builders, WPA workers and policemen, colored and white, they would never be surprised or incredulous when our polls reveal low audience acceptance for such properties as *THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER*, *CYRANO DE BERGERAC*, *THE SWAN*, *JOHNNY BELINDA* and *MAYERLING*.

Some producers preach the doctrine that every studio should release one or two 'prestige' pictures every year; they plead that it is immaterial whether such pictures make money or not. It may be that the *industry* would do well to produce 'sustaining' pictures for the minority audience.

But so long as films cost fortunes and distribution remains bottled up in a few main channels, no individual company can afford to cater to the minority taste. For better or worse, the Institute approaches audience research from the viewpoint of the majority. [See page 108 for an account of our title tests on this picture.]

EAST FROM HALIFAX

May, 1941.

Tests recently completed by the Institute indicate that a picture based on the adventures of American pilots ferrying bombers to Britain would have a high audience acceptance value.

During the last two years we have tested more than three hundred stories and *EAST FROM HALIFAX* ranks fifth out of the three hundred. It is particularly strong with the lower income-groups and with the younger age-groups — always a healthy sign, as anybody who studies our attendance charts will readily appreciate.

The high vote for *EAST FROM HALIFAX* does not depend on the topi-

cal nature of the story. No. The vote reflects the ever-mounting interest in aviation subjects and the perennial interest of male theatergoers in all combat subjects [particularly when the chief characters are Americans].

There is no question of *EAST FROM HALIFAX* being a propaganda picture. Far from it. *EAST FROM HALIFAX* is an aviation-adventure picture and is recognized by the public as such.

A majority of the comments recorded by our interviewers are along these simple lines:

"I like airplane pictures and I want to be a pilot."

"It's got adventure and I have a mania for airplanes."

"Sounds like a lot of action."

"It's an airplane picture and will keep you on edge."

"Boy, that'd be a thrill."

"I'm crazy about planes and pilots."

"This looks plenty good — action is what I like."

At this time, when big marquee names are becoming more and more difficult to obtain, the search for stories which can stand on their own feet assumes a new importance. *EAST FROM HALIFAX* is such a story. Whether it could be made on any reasonable budget is another matter, and one upon which we are not competent to pass judgment.

GILDED PHEASANT

October, 1941.

The vote for *GILDED PHEASANT* was 33 per cent, which places it low in the Third Class. Stories which emerge in this class have been defined as "those whose acceptance value is so small that even with a major marquee name they could not be expected to make successful A pictures."

Ordinarily we find that a story which registers a weak over-all vote at least shows strength with some special segment of the public. *GILDED PHEASANT* is a notable exception — it is below average with both sexes, with all age-groups, with all economic classes and with people in every size of community.

It is seldom that a triangle subject emerges high with male theater-

goers, so it is no surprise to find that GILDED PHEASANT is unpopular with men. In this case, however, the male vote is so exceptionally low that some special explanation must be sought. Inspection of the comments recorded by our interviewers shows that the normal male does not feel much sympathy either for the Mexican muralist or for the American cuckold.

The theme of an American husband losing his wife to a Mexican painter is not even popular with female ticket-buyers.

This is not the first time the Institute has noticed an unfavorable reaction to stories which revolve around a woman's infidelity toward her husband. Even in the case of MY LIFE WITH CAROLINE we received many adverse comments on the wife's lack of devotion.

With the utmost diffidence we offer the conclusion that unhappy marriage is not a fruitful source of popular story material. Ordinary entertainment-seekers appear to find it highly unpalatable: "There's too much two-timing going on in the world" and "I don't like trouble at home." *

What little interest is shown in GILDED PHEASANT is due almost entirely to the appeal of Mexico and the colorful fiesta as a background. But remember this: If you, the reader, have been fortunate enough to visit Mexico, you are almost bound to harbor a special interest in stories about that country; the vast majority of theatergoers do not share this special interest because they have never enjoyed an opportunity to visit Mexico.

As for the *title*, for every favorable comment we received two unfavorable comments.

GONE WITH THE WIND

January, 1939.

In January, 1939, we made a study to determine the number of people who were likely to see GONE WITH THE WIND, and we released our estimate to the press: 56,500,000 persons. At that time the general Hollywood reaction was that if Dr. Gallup knew anything whatever about the motion picture business, he would never have made such a grotesque over-estimate. Time has shown who was right. [That was ten

* The "Verdict of the Box-office" [Chapter IX] shows that marital difficulties are a negative factor. [See page 136.]

months before the picture opened in Atlanta, and more than a year before the Institute went to work for RKO.]

Subsequent studies have convinced us that there was nothing mysterious about the phenomenal box-office success of *GONE WITH THE WIND* — except in so far as the tremendous popularity of the book was inexplicable.

We are convinced that no *one* factor can be credited with the picture's success. Rather it is our finding that this success was due to maximum values in *all* of the major factors which govern box-office performance: the audience acceptance value of the story, the marquee value of the cast, the quality of the production and the publicity penetration.

Story

Ten months before the Atlanta premiere we found that 14,000,000 persons had read the book. When tested by the Institute for audience acceptance value, the story emerged higher than any story before or since.

Cast

Clark Gable, at that time, ranked third in order of marquee value.

Production

You know more than we do about the quality of Selznick's production.

Publicity Penetration

Our Index was still in the experimental stage when *GONE WITH THE WIND* was first shown, but it is a safe bet that the picture had the highest pre-release publicity penetration ever achieved. Out of curiosity, we measured its penetration in March, 1941, and obtained the amazing figure of 99 per cent.

In a survey conducted during March, 1940, we found that 44 per cent of the persons who had not yet seen the picture but still planned to see it, *were waiting for a lower price*. Up to that time we found that the average price paid had been \$1.01.

In an attempt to measure the comparative word-of-mouth publicity for *GONE WITH THE WIND*, *GRAPES OF WRATH* and *REBECCA*, theater-

goers were asked whether anybody had advised them to see these pictures.

	%
Advised to see GONE WITH THE WIND	85
Advised to see REBECCA	54
Advised to see GRAPES OF WRATH	46

Those who had seen GONE WITH THE WIND were asked whether they thought the picture "too long." It was found that 22 per cent thought it was too long, 11 per cent thought it was not long enough and 67 per cent thought it was about right.

When those who had not seen the picture and definitely did not want to see it were asked for their reasons, 22 per cent replied that it was "too long." No other deterrent factor was mentioned as frequently.

JOAN OF PARIS

October, 1941.

Although the *story* of JOAN OF PARIS has as great an acceptance value as any story used at RKO since MY FAVORITE WIFE, the picture cannot be expected to do good A business — that is the conclusion to be drawn from the results of two surveys just completed by the Institute. And the explanation is that no member of the cast ranks among the first hundred ticket-selling marquee names.

When tested without cast the story of JOAN OF PARIS emerges in the First Class under the Institute's new classification. Such stories are defined as those which, given adequate publicity penetration, *could* make successful A pictures without major marquee names.

In this case, however, the players are so obscure that, when the picture is tested with its cast, the ticket-buying public assumes that it must be a B.

We have been noticing an obstinate reluctance on the part of the public to accept pictures which are without marquee names. So accustomed have theatergoers become to the presence of a 'name' in every A picture, that they interpret the absence of any name as a sure indication that the picture is going to be a second feature — a B.

You plan a picture with one or more recognized marquee names, in the safe knowledge that these names will deliver a certain minimum

of ticket-buyers at the box-office. But just try making that picture without any marquee name. You find that the omission damages the picture's box-office expectancy out of all proportion.

The so-called 'star-system' isn't going to be easy for RKO to break. In this case, further sales resistance arises from the fact that Michele Morgan and Paul Henreid are *foreign-born*; our studies have demonstrated that foreign players start with two strikes on them. Actually, the biggest ticket-seller in the cast is Thomas Mitchell.

Scrutiny of the comments recorded by our interviewers in the field reveals this: the fact that the picture is about R.A.F. fliers will sell far more tickets than Michele Morgan or any of the other names. *The Institute therefore urges RKO either to change the title so as to include a reference to the R.A.F., or to give the R.A.F. star billing.*

Hundreds of comments could be quoted in support of this recommendation; they can all be summed up in this one from Iowa: "I never heard tell of any of those players — personally I don't go very strong for foreign actors and I don't care for foreign pictures. *But I like the R.A.F.*"

JOAN OF PARIS presents a mighty challenge to the RKO advertising and publicity department. And, if they will build their publicity around the R.A.F. rather than trying to pre-sell Miss Morgan, the picture's 'want-to-see' vote might possibly be great enough to enable RKO to sell it successfully as an A.

JOHNNY BELINDA

June, 1941.

The majority reaction was that the story is heavy and morbid. The following comments are typical:

"Sort of drab."

"Too depressing."

"There's too much grief without going to a movie on it."

"Sordid. What would Will Hays do to it?"

RKO wanted to know how many moviegoers had heard about JOHNNY BELINDA. We included two other Broadway plays as points of reference.

Following are the results:

	% Having Heard of the Play
LIFE WITH FATHER	49
THE AMERICAN WAY	32
JOHNNY BELINDA	22

The NEW YORK TIMES reports that "with the aid of certain devices and economies" JOHNNY BELINDA managed to stay open for 321 performances. The 'device' consisted of two-seats-for-the-price-of-one, while the 'economies' amounted to the elimination of two roles, players on half pay and the elimination of two settings.

If you were to assume that every seat at the Belasco and the Longacre had been filled for the duration of the run, you would arrive at a total maximum of 324,000 persons having seen JOHNNY BELINDA on Broadway. But actually the theater was seldom very full — despite two-seats-for-the-price-of-one, etc. A total estimate of 250,000 would be generous.

KITTY FOYLE

October, 1940.

[This is the one case where the Institute's prognosis was seriously at fault. We reported that the audience acceptance value of KITTY FOYLE was only average. This failure to predict the picture's box-office success led to the discovery of the precise box-office contribution of publicity penetration. Incidentally, it was the Institute which brought about the serialization of KITTY FOYLE in mass-circulation newspapers.]

Lippincott has sold 140,000 copies of the book. Our studies of book readership show that seven readers per copy would be a fair estimate of the total circulation — i.e., taking into account public libraries, rental libraries and borrowing from friends.* This would give a total figure

* Persons who had read at least one book during the past six months were asked: "Where did you obtain the last book you read?" The replies, broken down by economic groups, were as follows:

	Prosperous	Upper- Middle	Middle	Poor	Total
	%	%	%	%	%
Public Library	23	30	36	45	33
Borrowed [from friend, etc.]	16	26	23	22	23
Rental Library	18	16	13	15	15
TOTAL BORROWED	57	72	72	82	71
Bought	24	17	12	5	15
Obtained from other sources	19	11	16	13	14
	100	100	100	100	100

Notice that only 15 per cent had *bought* the last book they had read, while 48 per cent had borrowed from a library. These facts confirm the theory that *best-seller lists are not the most significant index of a book's gross circulation.*

of 980,000 persons who have read KITTY FOYLE to date [October, 1940].

It is significant that KITTY FOYLE, which has disappeared from the lists of best-sellers, still stands second among library favorites; there is no need for RKO to fear that they have missed the bus. Public interest in the story is actually greater today than it was when the book stood high on the list of best-sellers.

In a recent survey we found that KITTY FOYLE had been read by five women for every one man.

Any steps which RKO could take to boost the readership of KITTY FOYLE would be all to the good. We recall that REBECCA was serialized in twenty-six mass circulation newspapers immediately prior to the picture's release. The Grosset & Dunlap reprint edition of KITTY FOYLE will contribute something, but a newspaper syndication would contribute much more. [This recommendation was implemented by RKO. Upward of four hundred newspapers printed the serial, with the result that between our October survey and the release of the picture, the number of persons who had read the book increased more than 50 per cent.]

Twenty-three per cent of all theatergoers know that KITTY FOYLE is being made as a picture, while 11 per cent know that Ginger Rogers is playing Kitty [as of October, 1940]. Seventy-two per cent of all theatergoers have never heard of KITTY FOYLE — book or picture.

LAWRENCE OF ARABIA

September, 1940.

Inspection of the comments offered by respondents shows that so much has been written about Lawrence, not only in his own SEVEN PILARS OF WISDOM and the Lowell Thomas biography, but also in newspapers and magazines, that knowledge of his life story has now reached a very wide circulation. Respondents appreciate the fact that Lawrence is a *modern* hero — not a fusty figure from the school history books. They recognized the action, the color and the excitement of his career.

We are not in a position to estimate the cost of making LAWRENCE. But it is worth remembering that Lawrence never worked with more than a mere handful of followers, and that his adventures were free from pomp and circumstance. It should therefore be possible to produce the picture fairly economically.

Film rights in the life of Lawrence belong to Mr. Alexander Korda, on whose books the property is said to stand at £30,000. Korda once planned to make the picture with Leslie Howard, but was persuaded by Lawrence himself to postpone the production. Since the outbreak of war the property has again been shelved, this time because the British Government was anxious not to offend the susceptibilities of Turkey.

We understand that there is a clause in Korda's contract with the Lawrence trustees to the effect that the rights must never be transferred to an American company. Nevertheless we have reason to believe that the purchase could now be negotiated, and that funds blocked in London could be used for the purpose.

LIFE WITH FATHER

June, 1941.

The results of three polls conducted by the Institute indicate that the studio which secures *LIFE WITH FATHER* will be extremely fortunate.

When tested without cast, *LIFE WITH FATHER* emerged high. The comments recorded verbatim by our interviewers show that the main reason for its appeal are these:

- 1) It is a piece of light-hearted entertainment. Recent studies have shown that pictures which are easily *recognizable* as light-hearted entertainment are now at a premium.
- 2) It appeals to those very numerous theatergoers who have learned to like *family* pictures.
- 3) Its publicity penetration is 49 per cent. Here is why:
 - a) The Clarence Day book has sold 215,000 copies and has been read by more than 1,500,000 persons.
 - b) The play has been at the Empire Theater on Broadway for 665 performances, and — what is more significant — it has been smashing attendance records all over the country on its road tour.
 - c) In Chicago it completed sixty-six weeks at the Blackstone Theater, where it played to 600,000 persons who paid \$900,000 to see it.

- d) It also broke records in Boston and Philadelphia. In the former city it played for twenty-three weeks at the Repertory Theater, while in the latter city it recently completed a thirteen-week run at the Walnut Street Theater.
 - e) Up to June 14, 1941, it is said to have grossed \$1,420,000 in New York, and has turned in a net profit of \$938,000 in all.
- 4) The property is so well known that it comes in the class of recognized *social musts*. Our experience has shown that, when a story or a play achieves this status a large number of persons will find it easiest and cheapest to satisfy this *must* by seeing it on the screen. Herein, we believe, lies the secret of the success of most best-sellers which have done well as motion pictures.
[The mistake many producers have made was to assume that their properties belonged to this elite guard when actually they belonged to the larger company of *near* best-sellers. It seems to make all the difference in the world.]

There is little to say about the property's acceptance value for different segments of the population, except that it appeals more to females than to males, and more to the upper income-groups than to the two lower.

LITTLE MEN

December, 1940.

In our first report on this picture we recorded the fact that, of those who selected *LITTLE MEN* as a picture they would be reasonably sure to see, three out of four did so because they had read the book, or because they were Louisa M. Alcott fans. The implication of this finding was that the picture must adhere faithfully to the book, if it were to capitalize fully on its considerable ready-made market. But Towne and Baker chose to abandon this asset in favor of a more 'popular' treatment.

The reactions of theatergoers to their revision are not enthusiastic:

"They'll ruin the book."

"It doesn't sound like an improvement on the book."

"I'd like it if it weren't too streamlined — if it followed the book."

"If only it sticks to the book, it would make a swell movie."

One of the reasons why pictures made from best-sellers and classics so often do big business is that they are publicized by the crusading efforts of their faithful readers. Any violent departure from the spirit of the original can alienate these potential missionaries and sometimes actually incite them to promote a boycott.

The other factor responsible for the shrinkage in the acceptance value of *LITTLE MEN* was found to be the cast. We detected an unusually vocal criticism of the selection of Jack Oakie and Kay Francis:

"That doesn't sound like who I think could do LITTLE MEN."

"If Jack Oakie wasn't in that, I might see it."

"I can't imagine Kay Francis and Oakie in it."

It is possible that our prognosis will prove to be unduly pessimistic. *THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER* hails the picture as "one of the big sleepers of the year."

[*THE REPORTER* turned out to be wrong, the Institute right. *LITTLE MEN* finally rated even lower than we expected.]

LOU GEHRIG

June, 1941.

Six months ago the Institute began to suspect that, contrary to an accepted Hollywood tradition, the public would welcome a picture in which the chief character was a baseball player. The first evidence pointing to this conclusion came to light in this way: A representative cross-section of theatergoers was asked whether they would like to see pictures based on the lives of men in seven different occupations. The professions, in order of voting, were as follows:

1. Big League Baseball Player
2. Locomotive Engineer
3. Coal Miner
4. Fireman
5. Veterinary
6. Sand Hog
7. Hotel Chef

The next step was to find out *which* ball player would be most interesting to the theatergoing public. A study revealed that, *at that time*, Babe Ruth was the most acceptable, closely followed by Lou Gehrig. Here is the order of voting for the first ten: [February, 1941].

1. Babe Ruth
2. Lou Gehrig
3. Connie Mack
4. Ty Cobb
5. Walter Johnson
6. Christy Mathewson
7. Grover Alexander
8. Rogers Hornsby
9. John McGraw
10. Eddie Collins

The next step was to compose the synopsis of a hypothetical picture about Ruth, and to measure its audience acceptance value. This was done — with somewhat disappointing results. But that was February, when interest in baseball is not at its peak. Five months later, at the height of the baseball season, we tested the Babe Ruth story once again. Its acceptance value had increased 10 per cent. Even at that there wasn't much temptation to rush into production.

In the meantime, however, Gehrig had died, and the newspapers had canonized him. So we proceeded to test LOU GEHRIG. The story emerged in the select First Class.

We must emphasize that this estimate is based on the present state of the market — the reaction of the public *today*. Whether interest in Gehrig will abate as the months pass is a problem which only subsequent polls can decide. In any event it seems certain [on the basis of our previous results with Babe Ruth, quoted above] that the GEHRIG picture would do better in the summer than in the winter.

The reason why LOU GEHRIG is so much stronger than our earlier brain-child BABE RUTH is not far to seek. Examination of the comments dictated by hundreds of ticket-buyers to our interviewers in the field shows that, whereas the vote for RUTH was little more than a vote for baseball and a spectacular ball player, the vote for GEHRIG is all this and a vote for a hero, too. Here are some typical comments:

"Sorta example of clean citizenship — fine example of a man."

"Typical American fellow who reached the pinnacle of success."

"I don't like baseball but Lou Gehrig was a fine man and I'd like to see it."

"He was a great man — stood for wholesomeness and clean sport."

"There's a man who was held up as an ideal — this picture will help the younger generation a great deal."

It may interest the reader [and guide the aim of the men who have to advertise this picture] if we give the vote for GEHRIG by segments of the theatergoing public:

	%
ALL MALES	79
ALL FEMALES	59
AGE-GROUPS	
MALES aged 12-17	87
MALES aged 18-30	76
MALES aged 31-up	78
FEMALES aged 12-17	71
FEMALES aged 18-30	56
FEMALES aged 31-up	56
INCOME-GROUPS	
Prosperous	64
Upper-Middle	65
Middle	68
Poor	75
SIZE OF COMMUNITY	
Cities over 500,000	64
100,000 to 500,000	71
10,000 to 100,000	69
Under 10,000	77

It is interesting to recall that the final audience for another of Mr. Goldwyn's pictures — *THE WESTERNER* — was 61 per cent *male*. We have found that the average box-office performance of pictures with predominant *male* appeal is slightly higher than the average box-office performance of pictures with predominantly *female* appeal. [See page 137.]

Our synopsis was composed before we knew that Mr. Goldwyn or anybody else was considering this subject, and our treatment is therefore likely to be a long way out of line with the producer's conception.

It must be emphasized that the findings of this report are based upon

the Institute's proposed treatment. No final estimate of the picture's acceptance value can be made until we have had an opportunity of testing Mr. Goldwyn's treatment.

MARK TWAIN

March, 1941.

The great question mark in our minds when we received this assignment was whether the subject would be too 'educational.' We find that MARK TWAIN is indeed spoiled for many people by having been a part of their school curriculum, but not to anything like the extent we had feared. Theatergoers were shown synopses of MARK TWAIN and ROBERT E. LEE and asked the question, "Which of these two movies would be most educational?" Seventy per cent named LEE as most educational, only 30 per cent naming MARK TWAIN.

Some of the favorable comments on MARK TWAIN are of such a nature that they must be discounted under the heading 'prestige.'

* * * * *

The term 'prestige' as used in the field of psychology may be defined as follows: "The measurable influence of a temporary reputation for social achievement upon attitudes or opinions." Reduced to everyday terms, the above psychological jargon means simply this: If you ask Mr. and Mrs. John Q. Citizen to state which are their favorite magazines, they are very likely to enumerate TIME, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC, HARPER'S, VOGUE and the like. On the other hand, if you walk into their home, the magazines which will actually be lying on the living room table will be LIBERTY, TRUE STORY, LOOK and CLICK. The difference, then, between their pretensions and their acts is the *prestige* element. It is their instinctive attempt to add to their social and intellectual stature by claiming an interest in high-brow or sophisticated periodicals which will enhance their *prestige* with their interlocutor and, even, with themselves.

An example of a laboratory experiment which illustrates the use of this term is as follows:

Short excerpts of various types of unidentified writings were submitted to a group of respondents.

They rated them as to their likes and dislikes. When the same writings were subsequently presented as being written by *famous authors*, the increase in the favorable vote was called the *prestige value*.

This prestige factor is such a fundamental yet mercurial element of the human psyche that it is not surprising to find it is one of the first pitfalls into which the amateur researcher tumbles. And, naturally, it operates in the field of motion pictures just as much as anywhere else. It is that subtle thing which makes you say you prefer single features when you actually *buy* double features, which makes you pretend that you would rather see ABE LINCOLN than BABES IN ARMS, that you prefer Muni to Mickey Rooney. The Institute learned to beware of prestige five years ago, and devised seven different ways of eliminating it.

* * * * *

In the case of MARK TWAIN, however, a large majority of the favorable comments are entirely naive and free from prestige. Here is a small selection of these comments, selected at random:

HUMOR

We'd enjoy these biographical movies if only they were funny.
Anyone can use a good laugh once in a while.
Because I like his style of humor.
It should be very, very funny.

ENTERTAINMENT

Would get me out of the 'dumps' — cheer me up.
I think it's a lot of fun.
Some tragedy and plenty of laughs — should be good.
Sounds fair as biographies go. Not so dull as most.

INTEREST IN HIS PERSONALITY

He was certainly a character.
He was quite a rugged, bluff character — obscene in some of his books.
He's been such a down-to-the-earth character.
I'm certain I'd like this very much.
I like the things I've heard about him as a personality.
Can't think of a man I'd rather have been.

ADVENTURE

Sounds pretty full of adventure.
Sounds exciting with lots of adventure.
It's a good adventure picture. I like those pictures about adventure like that.

STARTS YOUNG AND GROWS OLD

Like to see pictures where he starts off young and grows up.
I want to see that on account of the story from childhood to old age.

NOSTALGIA FOR OLD TIMES

Yes, if that horse and buggy upsetting is an example.
Just because of memories.
Brings back my boyhood.

FAMILY APPEAL

I'd want my daughter to see this — a good family picture.
Fun for the youngsters.
This would be the one for the children.

INTEREST IN HIS BOOKS

It's like HUCKLEBERRY FINN.
I enjoyed TOM SAWYER so much I'd like to see the story of Sam Clemens.
I like his books — most boys do. [A boy aged 14.]

A PART OF THE AMERICAN SCENE

They could make a nice slice of the American scene out of that.
I'm interested in that part of the country.
I live near that. I've seen those places.
Such a thoroughly *American* character.

You could make two completely different kinds of pictures about MARK TWAIN. The first would be an historical masterpiece. The second would be humorous, adventurous and romantic, without any high-brow pretensions. It might be panned by the more solemn critics but our survey indicates that it would be welcomed by theatergoers. A large part of its box-office success would depend on the extent to which you were successful in publicizing the fact that the picture was not a stodgy biography. That presents a high challenge to your publicity department.

We have reason to believe that it would broaden the audience acceptance value of MARK TWAIN if you could start the picture in Twain's boyhood, with a boy like Jimmy Lydon. There seems to be widespread interest in pictures where the hero starts young and grows old. The metamorphosis induces a pleasant nostalgia. What is more, the wider the age-span portrayed, the more age-groups can project themselves into the picture — which all goes to broaden the story's audience appeal.

In recent years historical biographies have been consistently black-balled by the theatergoing public, and it is only natural to fight shy of making any more pictures in this classification. But it is just when the

rest of Hollywood has accepted a blanket taboo that some shrewd producer will ignore the taboo and clean up.

We interviewed the grandson of the man who worked with Twain as a printer's devil in Hannibal, Missouri, and who ran away with him to join the army — the time that Twain's mule refused to ford the stream. A young Negress in Chicago bitterly recalled that Mark Twain was a "slave-owner — or anyway his family was." One boy voted for MARK TWAIN because his birthday was on the same day of the month, another respondent because her mother was buried in the same graveyard "within twelve feet of Mark Twain."

All this may seem trivial and irrelevant, but it highlights the fact that Mark Twain, like Knute Rockne and Lillian Russell, is a part of the fabric of America — which is more than you could say for Zola, Pasteur, Juarez, Reuter, Parnell, Rembrandt, Cavell, Queen Victoria, Queen Mary of Scotland, Marco Polo, Elizabeth and Essex, Stanley and Livingstone, etc. Of the *American* biographies a vast majority have been handled in a thoroughly stodgy, self-conscious way — without action, without humor, devoid of entertainment values.

Don't forget the first comment recorded above: "*We'd enjoy these biographical movies if only they were funny.*"

SEQUEL

A recent VARIETY is reported as saying: "Final clincher that he [Mr. Jesse Lasky] was on the right hunch is the results of a national survey by the AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE which showed overwhelming interest in the contemplated Mark Twain film." We don't know if Mr. Lasky has actually seen a copy of our report. You will remember that we emphasized an important qualification — "*We'd enjoy these biographical movies if only they were funny,*" etc. We hope that he is aware of this qualification; if he produces a stodgy biographical picture he will lose money.

MR. ZERO

June, 1941.

Urbain Ledoux died in New York on April 12, 1941. He had spent the best years of his life serving the city's ragtag and bobtail. Some deep religious instinct had sent him among the poor and the disinherited along the streets of forgotten men.

We received many unfavorable comments on the melancholy aspect of the story, which is ominous. But we also found a fairly widespread interest in it on the basis of its *inspirational* quality.

What we have tested is the general idea of a picture about Ledoux. There is, as yet, no treatment, no script. It might be that your treatment would tap the same robust, sentimental market as the Boys Town series. But it is perhaps a sign of these entertainment-hungry times that the latest Boys Town picture is not doing well, despite the biggest and fourth-biggest ticket-selling stars in the business.

The appeal of MR. ZERO is markedly greater in the large cities over 500,000 than in smaller communities. It is therefore to be expected that it would do better in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, etc., than anywhere else.

MY LIFE WITH CAROLINE

January, 1941.

The words used most frequently by the public in discussing Ronald Colman with our interviewers are:

1. Adventure, adventurer, adventurous.
2. Soldier, soldier of fortune.
3. Serious.
4. Gentleman.

The results of our tests show that MY LIFE WITH CAROLINE is low in audience acceptance value, and examination of the comments reveals that one explanation for this fact concerns the casting of Ronald Colman in a light comedy role:

"I like Colman best in serious roles like LOST HORIZON."

"Colman isn't the type for comedy."

"It sounds more like Dunne and Grant."

"Well, to be truthful, I can't picture Colman in light comedy."

"Ronald Colman is rather a dramatic actor instead of comedy."

"I think it would be serious with Colman."

"I don't think Colman is really a comedian."

It will be remembered that in a special study conducted in advance of the release of LUCKY PARTNERS, we discovered a similar attitude

among the theatergoing public; apparently that picture did not succeed in altering public opinion.

To satisfy our own curiosity we tested MY LIFE WITH CAROLINE again, substituting Cary Grant and Irene Dunne for Ronald Colman and Anna Lee. Results showed that Grant and Dunne would have increased the box-office gross by no less than 35 per cent.

Aside from the miscasting of Colman, theatergoers do not seem to relish the idea of cuckoldry, around which the plot revolves.

NO MORE GAS

October, 1941.

The majority of theatergoers interviewed in our surveys showed little interest in the Nordhoff & Hall story. When tested without cast, the story elicited a reaction which is summed up in this comment: "*It just ain't anything — there's not enough plot to that picture.*"

The actual vote recorded for NO MORE GAS, when tested without cast, was 48 per cent — which places the story in the Third Class — stories whose acceptance value is so low that even with a major marquee name they could not be expected to make successful A pictures.

Our polls indicate that there is one way in which you could perhaps salvage this picture. Audiences are hungry for laughs, and such votes as were registered for NO MORE GAS mostly came from theatergoers who thought the story might be funny. *The funnier you can make it, the better it will do.*

It must be remembered, however, that Laughton's following is essentially an upper-class, upper age-group following. [See AUDIT OF MARQUEE VALUES.] This particular segment of the market has a more exacting standard of humor than the nether segments who flock to Abbott and Costello or Bob Hope. It isn't going to be so easy to get laughs from Laughton fans.

Here you run into another difficulty. If we were called upon to cast a funny picture, Laughton is one of the last personalities we should advise you to select. Previous surveys conducted in connection with MR. PINKIE revealed that Laughton's name on the marquee does not suggest that a comedy is being screened; the majority of theatergoers think of him in terms of his more serious roles — Tony Patucci, the

Hunchback, Pengall'on, Bly and Barrett. Those who associate him with his more amiable roles — such as Ruggles and the Beachcomber — are in a minority. Mr. Laughton may not like the fact that he has been typed as a bad man and a heavy, but the fact remains, and RKO producers should be fully aware of it before they decide to use Laughton in a comedy role.*

"No — I saw Laughton in *THE BEACHCOMBER* and that was terrible," was the reaction of a 25-year-old interne in New York City.

[See page 108 for results of title test on this property.]

PASSAGE FROM BORDEAUX

October, 1941.

The audience acceptance value of the story of *PASSAGE FROM BORDEAUX* is only just great enough to place it in our second category of stories — "Those whose acceptance is average — with big marquee names and high publicity penetration they could make successful A pictures."

It follows, inevitably, that when you cast minor personalities in a medium-grade story of this type, you emerge with a product which does not stand a good chance of becoming a successful A picture. *PASSAGE FROM BORDEAUX* must have marquee names capable of selling tickets in their own right if it is to be successfully sold as an A.

The power of Lucille Ball, James Craig and James Gleason to sell tickets is negligible; and the substitution of Victor Mature for James Craig would make little difference one way or the other. Not one of these personalities ranks among the first one hundred.

Respondents likened *PASSAGE FROM BORDEAUX* to *ARISE MY LOVE*, *MAN HUNT*, *UNDERGROUND*, *ESCAPE*, *SO ENDS OUR NIGHT* and *ONE NIGHT IN LISBON*.

In one of our tests we indicated that William L. Shirer would actively collaborate on the screen play. This fact resulted in a net increase of one per cent in the vote. While some theatergoers reacted favorably to Shirer's name, there were others who were frightened away from the picture by our reference to him — "*that Shirer is more for serious thinkers.*" It is probable that any label of this kind tends to identify

* By the time *NO MORE GAS* reaches the screen it is possible that one theatergoer in five will have seen his performance in *IT STARTED WITH EVE*.

the picture as a serious, almost documentary property; thereby it eliminates almost as many customers as it attracts.

[See page 108 for results of title test on this property.]

THE RAMPARTS WE WATCH

August, 1940.

Our work in exploring audience reactions has demonstrated that most regular theatergoers primarily seek *enjoyment* when they see a motion picture. *THE RAMPARTS WE WATCH* is not the type of picture people enjoy, in the usual sense, no matter how much it interests them.

Every effort should be made not to conceal this weakness, but to capitalize on it. Theatergoers must be prepared for the departure from formula. The campaign should go to town on the theme that *THE RAMPARTS* is a new kind of picture, the first great American documentary, marking an epoch in the history of the movies. The advertising and publicity should sell the idea that every well-informed person must see this new phenomenon and be able to discuss it intelligently, just as he must be able to discuss the fashionable best-sellers.

Unfortunately, the campaign has not capitalized on this angle and we find that people are going to see the picture under the false impression that they are going to be entertained, as usual. For that reason a large number of theatergoers have been disappointed by *THE RAMPARTS*, and their disappointment has seriously militated against the picture's success.

We find that most people are mistaken or confused in their understanding of what the picture is about. They expect it to concern the *current* war instead of the World War, and specifically they expect it to concern the state of our present national defenses. We find that the title has several misleading connotations. People who recognize it as the title of a recent best-seller assume that the picture, like the book, is an inventory of national defense. People who never heard of Major George Fielding Eliot's book get a variety of vague ideas from association with the Star Spangled Banner.

Even those who have seen *THE RAMPARTS* disagree widely in their interpretation of its message. We find that some persons think that its

message is that we should go into the war, others think it is that we should stay out; still others say that they think one thing one minute, the opposite the next. Some persons think the picture has no message, but is merely an attempt to re-create the World War period.

The picture will probably be better received if it adopts a more obvious point of view, even at the risk of being identified as propaganda. [*Subsequently adopted.*]

Every effort should be made to increase public discussion of *THE RAMPARTS*. The fact that the German Embassy is trying to censor parts of the picture should be broadcast from the housetops, and any good publicity man will be able to think of many other pegs on which to hang a new and *more vigorous* publicity campaign. The most nearly parallel case is *THE GRAPES OF WRATH*, which was also lacking in entertainment value. But our records show that Steinbeck's grim subject was widely discussed, and it was comparatively successful.

In the present case it seems imperative to whip up controversy. It is not a job which can be done within the confines of the *TIME-LIFE* publications; and it is not a job which can be done by orthodox promotion.

THE RED PONY

October, 1941.

The results of a nation-wide survey recently completed by the Institute show that the theme of *THE RED PONY* does not enjoy a wide appeal. The actual vote recorded was 42 per cent, which places it in the Third Class.

It must be emphasized that our tests were confined to the basic theme, without reference either to treatment or to cast.

THE RED PONY is very strong with children under eighteen. "I would like that because I like ponies," said a 12-year-old girl in Reading, Pennsylvania. The story is strongest of all with boys — a clear case of self-identification.

It is also fairly strong with middle-aged and elderly females, in some of whom it touches the maternal instinct. "Yes — I'd see it, maybe because I've a son of my own about that age; it's something real." Said an old lady of seventy summers: "I'd take one of my grandchildren."

It is with the important age-group eighteen to thirty that *THE RED*

PONY falls short. "I think this is more for young people." "No, I don't want to see it, but I think it would be good for kids." "This is more for a child." "Infantile." The Institute makes no attempt to justify this lamentable point of view; we can only report that it exists and is widespread.

The property gathers some strength from the name of its author, many of our respondents remarking on their familiarity with Steinbeck's work. But even Steinbeck fans cannot be fully counted on to support the film. Almost half the persons who commented on the reference to Steinbeck in the synopsis indicated that they preferred this author in his GRAPES-OF-WRATH manner: "I like John Steinbeck's books, but this type of movie does not appeal to me. More for children."

R.U.R.

May, 1941.

Nineteen years ago the Theater Guild produced Karel Capek's R.U.R. RKO has instructed us to measure its acceptance value with the motion picture public of 1941, in the hope that it would find an enthusiastic market among those persons who read the pseudo-scientific comic strips of the SUPERMAN type. We eliminated the propaganda element present in the play.

When tested without cast, R.U.R. emerges fairly high with boys under eighteen, but is found to be more or less without appeal for the rest of the motion picture public. It is probable that interest in subjects of this type is not sufficiently *widespread* for motion picture purposes.

The following table shows the vote for R.U.R. by different segments of the theatergoing public:

	%
ALL PERSONS INTERVIEWED	31
MALES	39
FEMALES	23
AGE-GROUPS	
12-17 MALES	65
FEMALES	33

INCREASING PROFITS

AGE-GROUPS (Cont'd)	%
18-30 MALES	39
FEMALES	23
31-UP MALES	17
FEMALES	15
INCOME-GROUPS	
PROSPEROUS	22
UPPER-MIDDLE	29
MIDDLE	36
POOR	37

Having regard to the fact that any production of R.U.R. would have to be on an A picture cost basis — costuming the robots, trick effect shots, etc. — it is difficult to derive any measure of encouragement from the findings of our survey.

Be it said that, knowing the confidence reposed in this property by persons well qualified to judge, we have tried everything we could think of in an attempt to find some form in which R.U.R. would appeal more widely to the motion picture public. Three different synopses were tried, with and without the horror element — same result in every case. In one poll we even tried using the title SUPERMAN. It made no difference.

SAMUEL GOMPERS

August, 1941.

The results of a nation-wide poll reveal that this subject possesses very little audience appeal. Only 45 per cent of the persons interviewed expressed any interest in the idea — which places it in the lowest category, along with such properties as THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER, JOHNNY BELINDA and CARMEN.

It might come as something of a shock to the American Federation of Labor to learn that GOMPERS interests the rich more than he interests the poor. Here is the vote by different segments of the ticket-buying public:

INCOME-GROUPS	%
PROSPEROUS	49
UPPER-MIDDLE	47
MIDDLE	46
POOR	40
AGE-GROUPS	
AGES 12-17	39
AGES 18-30	45
AGES 31-UP	50
MALES	51
FEMALES	38

Those persons who find themselves in revolt against the frivolous formulas favored by the theatergoing public are always complaining that — in the words of Donald Ogden Stewart — “The *poor* man cannot go into a movie theater and see upon the screen the real expression of his problems and the deep understanding of his struggle against life.”

Our findings point to the conclusion that the people who most want to see the poor man's struggles are *rich* men. For example, *GRAPES OF WRATH* was far more popular with the prosperous than with the poor. It is the same with *GOMPERS*.

Audience reactions to *GOMPERS* conform to the typical pattern of most biographies: unashamed boredom on the part of the majority, with a tell-tale sprinkling of those good intentions which don't mature when the crucial test comes — at the box-office.

The following are typical comments:

I ought to like this one, but I don't. Sounds too boring.

It would probably be a very heavy picture.

Too dry. I don't like those serious ones.

My idea of amusement and entertainment does not call for such a story.

You see this in life and I don't like to go to a show to see it.

I'm not much on biographies — I like to see something funny.

I have studied about Gompers in Sociology.

Too much Socialist and this and that in it.

If you understand labor problems it would be all right, but I don't.

It tends to politics and I don't go for that.

The low vote from the younger customers is interesting. Said a typical boy in Indianapolis: “Not much of a picture for a kid. It's more for an older person, I think.”

SILVER SPOON

October, 1941.

In a report dated August 14 the Institute drew attention to SILVER SPOON, a novel by Clarence Budington Kelland. On October 7 it was announced that RKO had purchased this story.

The theme of this property, with its hero taking the jump from riches to rags in his stride, strikes a sympathetic chord with rich and poor alike.

The student of our research findings might suppose that SILVER SPOON, being a story about a man, would interest male theatergoers more than female. Actually it seems to interest both sexes about equally; females appear to identify themselves rather easily with Peggy Fogarty, the red-head who helps the playboy face the future.

The audience acceptance value of this story shows marked differences by size of community. It is considerably stronger in smaller cities than in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, etc. For that reason it would perhaps be wise not to open the picture in the big cities until its popularity has been established in such situations as Lowell and Sioux City — unless, of course, you can offset this weakness by obtaining a personality whose power to sell tickets is exceptionally strong in big cities. [This is true of Cary Grant, Joel McCrea, Brian Aherne and Randolph Scott — among others.]

What is significant about the comments we obtained on SILVER SPOON is that the greater part of them are not votes for a *type* of picture but rather an express desire to see the particular character featured in the story, Ogden Pieter. The following comments are typical:

"That guy's got the guts it takes these days."

"I like a guy with a lot of go-get-it pluck."

"I like the fellow's spunk."

"I think a guy that would go from riches to truck-driving would be worth seeing."

On the evidence it would seem that if RKO could obtain a reasonably strong player for the featured role, they might have a hit on their hands.

In our tests SILVER SPOON received a vote of 58 per cent, which places

it high in the Second Class. Stories which fall into this class have been defined as those which, given a marquee name and high publicity penetration, *could* make successful A pictures. It is more than doubtful whether any Second Class story can ever be successful without a real marquee name. In other words — SILVER SPOON is not a strong enough story for one of those medium budget star-less pictures in which RKO has come to specialize.

SISTER CARRIE

April, 1941.

Our finding is that Irene Dunne in SISTER CARRIE would pack them in between the ages of thirty-five and fifty — females mostly.

We re-tested SISTER CARRIE with Ginger Rogers in place of Irene Dunne. This substitution increased the box-office expectancy of the picture by 10 per cent.

The gain came chiefly from females under thirty — a segment of the population which happens to be more important than any other in terms of the motion picture dollar. As was to be expected, the substitution of Rogers for Dunne reduced the picture's acceptance with females over thirty. But that does not matter.

Three obvious differences exist between the Dreiser property and KITTY FOYLE:

- 1) SISTER CARRIE is not a current best-seller. It therefore lacks that invaluable attribute of being a widely recognized social *must*.
- 2) SISTER CARRIE, as Dreiser wrote it, does not carry the same whiff of today. For that reason it is not quite the natural for self-identification that KITTY FOYLE was.
- 3) SISTER CARRIE is not so light-hearted as KITTY FOYLE. Respondents complain that SISTER CARRIE is too heavy, too serious, too sad, too morbid.

SNOW GOOSE

November, 1941.

Paul Gallico's short story, as it appeared in the SATURDAY EVENING POST just one year ago, is too grim and morbid to enjoy high acceptance value with motion picture audiences at this time. Such is the conclusion to be drawn from the results of a nation-wide survey just completed by the Institute. The story received a vote of 51 per cent, which places it on the borderline between Second and Third Class.

It is the excitement of the Dunkirk episode which saves SNOW GOOSE from failure to interest the theatergoing public. The more you build up this aspect of the story, the greater will be its acceptance.

We find that the deformed hero is interesting to some persons, but to far more the idea of a cripple coveting a young maiden is highly repugnant. We received innumerable comments illustrating this repugnance, of which the following are typical:

"I don't like it about this deformed guy falling for a young girl."

— 24-year-old stenographer in office of silk mill in Lowell, Massachusetts.

"Gee! Who wants to see a cripple?"

— 19-year-old daughter of a surveyor in Lincoln, Nebraska.

"I don't like having pitiful characters for heroes."

— Woman high school teacher in Danbury, Connecticut.

This factor accounts for the substantially below-average appeal SNOW GOOSE has for the female portion of the ticket-buying public. [Perhaps some less repulsive defect could be substituted.] With males the story is average — thanks to Dunkirk.

Title

"What kind of a title is that?" — asked a 26-year-old bookkeeper in a dress house in New York City. The title SNOW GOOSE may have some subtle significance for those who are already acquainted with the story, but our findings indicate that it does not possess much pulling power

so far as motion picture audiences are concerned. Comments indicated that few persons are interested in seeing a picture about a goose — outside of a Disney cartoon.

* * * * *

Our general conclusion is that SNOW GOOSE will have to be considerably changed if it is to appeal to the ordinary theatergoer. *First*, the Dunkirk episode should be enlarged. *Second*, the hero's deformity should be modified. *Third*, a new title should be given to the story.

If all these changes were made, the story's audience acceptance value would certainly be increased. Whether it would then bear sufficient resemblance to Paul Gallico's story to justify the purchase price is a problem upon which we are not qualified to pass judgment.

WATER GYPSIES

February, 1941.

This story emerged lower than anything submitted by RKO since BILL OF DIVORCEMENT.

The plot may be basically the same as KITTY FOYLE. But the Philadelphia white-collar girl is one thing, and Jane Bell, the Hammersmith water gypsy, is something very different. A Chicago stenographer simply cannot project herself into the life of a bargee's daughter on the Thames.

Even in England, Mr. Herbert's novel was enthusiastically received only by those people who share his esoteric passion for the Thames and for Cockney types; its appeal was not sufficiently broad, even in England, to make it a major best-seller.

The American public is thinking of England today in terms of air-raids and war. We encountered resistance to the idea of a story with a *peaceful* English background. In this connection the following comment was typical: "*I don't think people are floating on barges in England now.*"

WATER GYPSIES has much in common with PYGMALION. The Shaw picture was successful on Broadway, but was not so popular in the hinterlands — despite its considerable word-of-mouth publicity. PYGMALION was not among the forty top-grossing pictures of the 1938-1939 season.

If we may be permitted to make a suggestion in regard to Maureen O'Hara, it is this: cast her in a picture with a 100 per cent *American* background. So far she has been seen twice as an English girl [JAMAICA INN and BILL OF DIVORCEMENT] and once as a French girl [HUNCHBACK]. She is still a *foreigner*. She needs an American role before the American public will take her to its heart.

WEEKEND FOR THREE

February, 1941.

WEEKEND FOR THREE falls into the Third Class. There are some indications that this kind of comedy may be beginning to pall: "This is just like TOO MANY WIVES — HUSBANDS — and all the others." The more frequently a formula is milked, the more discriminating and critical becomes the audience reaction, and the more important it becomes to provide some basic element which will differentiate your picture from its predecessors in the same vein.

Theatergoers do not show as much enthusiasm for the basic situation in WEEKEND FOR THREE as we found for Mr. McCarey's Enoch Arden situation last year: "Plot is not so good — getting rid of a guest not interesting." Other respondents foresaw that Mr. Schulberg's theme might wear a little thin before the end of the picture: "*Sounds like it would just drag on and on.*"

THE WIDOW WORE A BLACK EYE

February, 1941.

Only ten stories tested by the Institute during the last two years have received a higher vote than THE WIDOW WORE A BLACK EYE.

THE WIDOW is the same type of story as WEEKEND FOR THREE, but its audience appeal is considerably greater. While we cannot be absolutely certain why this is so, the most probable explanation is that theatergoers find THE WIDOW a more substantial story; you will recall that WEEKEND FOR THREE was widely criticized as containing only enough material for one scene.

The following comments on *THE WIDOW*, as recorded verbatim by our interviewers, are representative:

"Sounds like it might be fast-moving, witty conversation."

"Sounds like lots of good laughs."

"I think it's very, very funny."

"Just to read the title would make you curious."

"It gets away from realism."

"Must be a lot of wisecracking, kidding and joking."

"The makings of one of those dizzy comedies."

WRAPPED IN CELLOPHANE

February, 1941.

Four separate nation-wide surveys have been used to measure the audience acceptance value of Bartlett Cormack's *WRAPPED IN CELLOPHANE*. In every case the story emerged low. There was little vocal criticism of any particular element in the story — simply a general lack of interest.

The subject of horse racing, of itself, interests the theatergoing public less than it interests the motion picture community in Hollywood. When theatergoers were asked whether they followed the news on baseball, football, horse racing and tennis, results were as follows:

	Yes %
Football	33
Baseball	24
Tennis	9
Horse racing	8

Studies of reader traffic on the sports pages of ten newspapers * showed that the average readership of the best-read horse racing news item is only 10 per cent, as against 33 per cent for baseball and 22 per cent for football. These percentages represent the proportion of persons interviewed who had read the subject matter in question. Interviewing was well distributed throughout the year so that any bias due to seasonal variation was removed.

* NEW YORK TIMES, MANCHESTER LEADER, SOUTH BEND TRIBUNE, NEW YORK HERALD-TRIBUNE, CHICAGO TRIBUNE, CANTON REPOSITORY, CLEVELAND PRESS, PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE, SCRANTON TIMES and PITTSBURGH PRESS.

The figures for thirteen sports subjects are as follows:

	%
Baseball	33
Football	22
Boxing	17
Hockey	14
Basketball	11
Horse Racing	10
Auto Races	10
Bowling	9
Boating	8
Track	8
Golf	7
Tennis	7
Swimming	5

In another nation-wide survey 63 per cent of all persons interviewed said they had never attended a horse race in all their lives. Eighty-two per cent said that they had not placed a wager on the result of a horse race during the past year. Only 8 per cent were able to name the horse which won the Kentucky Derby last year.

These facts do not imply that a race-track background must always defeat a picture. Far from it. But our findings suggest that the subject is certainly no magic ingredient.

Radio Serials

March, 1941.

In three nation-wide surveys the Institute has measured the *ready-made* interest of the theatergoing public in sixty radio serials as material for motion pictures. Representative cross-sections of *theatergoers* were shown lists of twenty serials at a time. The question was as follows: "Here's a list of some radio serials. Some of them are being made into movies. Are there any on that list you yourself would especially enjoy seeing as a movie?"

Most radio serials have an audience which is preponderantly housewife. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that in our study the general level of acceptance for these stories emerged nearly twice as high among women as among men.

There are certain differences between our results and the current Crossley ratings. Why? Because:

- 1) Our motion picture cross-section is radically different from Crossley's radio cross-section.
- 2) The ready-made market for a picture based on any radio serial is a function of the total number of persons who have *ever* listened to the program, while the Crossley rating reflects only the audience at one point of time. There are serials on our list which are no longer on the air; they accumulated their following in years gone by.

This list will help to guide you in the selection of serials for future consideration.

Rank		Rank	
1.	One Man's Family	31.	Amanda of Honeymoon Hill
2.	Pepper Young's Family	32.	Against the Storm
3.	Stella Dallas	33.	Mary Marlin
4.	Women in White *	34.	Linda's First Love
5.	Young Dr. Malone *	35.	{Man I Married
6.	Life Can Be Beautiful		{Our Gal Sunday
7.	The O'Neills	37.	Stepmother
8.	Scattergood Baines	38.	Kate Hopkins, Angel of Mercy
9.	Vic and Sade		{Arnold Grimm's Daughter
10.	Joyce Jordan, Girl Interne *	39.	{My Son and I
11.	Captain Midnight		{Orphans of Divorce
12.	David Harum	42.	When a Girl Marries
13.	Backstage Wife	43.	{Lone Journey
14.	Road of Life *		{Young Widder Brown
15.	{Guiding Light	45.	Kitty Keene
	{Hilltop House	46.	Johnson Family
	{Ma Perkins	47.	Light of the World
18.	John's Other Wife	48.	Houseboat Hannah
19.	Second Husband		{Home of the Brave
20.	Romance of Helen Trent	49.	{Lost Empire
			{Government Girl
21.	Myrt and Marge	52.	Heart of Julia Blake
22.	The Goldbergs		{Ellen Randolph
23.	Bachelor's Children	53.	{Portia Faces Life
24.	Kathleen Norris	55.	Editor's Daughter
25.	Lorenzo Jones	56.	Right to Happiness
26.	Girl Alone	57.	We, the Abbots
27.	Big Sister		{Mother O' Mine
28.	Just Plain Bill	58.	{This Small Town
29.	{Betty and Bob		{Women of Courage
	{Valiant Lady		

* Medical background.

Old Films for New

April, 1941.

In a nation-wide survey the Institute exposed the titles of one hundred motion pictures released prior to 1936 and asked theatergoers "Are there any on this list which you would especially enjoy seeing as a new movie?"

In the results of this survey the reader may find ideas not only for re-makes and re-issues but also for new pictures. It is remarkable that four out of the first ten were pictures about the last war.

Rank		Rank	
1.	ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT	14.	THE SHEIK
2.	IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT		{ THE BIG PARADE
3.	COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO		{ I AM A FUGITIVE FROM A CHAIN
4.	HELL'S ANGELS	15.	{ GANG
5.	BIRTH OF A NATION		{ PRIVATE LIFE OF HENRY THE EIGHTH
6.	FAREWELL TO ARMS	18.	{ BARRETT'S OF WIMPOLE STREET
7.	{ LITTLE WOMEN		{ CAVALCADE
	{ COVERED WAGON	20.	{ DINNER AT EIGHT
9.	WHAT PRICE GLORY		{ TEN COMMANDMENTS
10.	GRAND HOTEL		{ THE BIG HOUSE
11.	{ FORTY-SECOND STREET		{ THE CHAMP
	{ BEN HUR	22.	{ CIMARRON
13.	DADDY LONG LEGS		{ DESERT SONG

ALSO RAN

ABIE'S IRISH ROSE	GOLD DIGGERS OF BROADWAY
ANNA CHRISTIE	GREEN GODDESS, THE
ARROWSMITH	HALLELUJAH
BAD GIRL	HOUSE OF ROTHSCHILD
BEAU BRUMMEL	I'M NO ANGEL
BERKELEY SQUARE	IN OLD ARIZONA
BLACK PIRATE	JOURNEY'S END
CHANG	KING OF KINGS
COCKEYED WORLD	KISS ME AGAIN
COMMON CLAY	LA BOHEME
CROWD, THE	LADY FOR A DAY
DISRAELI	LAST COMMAND
DOWN TO THE SEA IN SHIPS	LAST LAUGH
EMMA	LOST WORLD
FLESH AND THE DEVIL	MADAME X
FIVE STAR FINAL	MARRIAGE CIRCLE
FOOTLIGHT PARADE	MERRY-GO-ROUND
FREE SOUL	MERRY WIDOW
FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE	MIN AND BILL
GUARDSMAN	MONSIEUR BEAUCAIRE

NANOOK OF THE NORTH	SHE DONE HIM WRONG
OLD ENGLISH	SKIPPY
OLIVER TWIST	SORRELL AND SON
ONE NIGHT OF LOVE	STATE FAIR
PATRIOT	STREET ANGEL
PETER PAN	STREET SCENE
PHANTOM OF THE OPERA	SUNNY SIDE UP
PRIVATE LIFE OF HELEN OF TROY	SUNRISE
QUO VADIS	TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES
RASPUTIN AND THE EMPRESS	TOL'ABLE DAVID
RESURRECTION	TROUBLE IN PARADISE
RIO RITA	UNDERWORLD
ROSITA	UNHOLY THREE
SCARAMOUCHE	VIVA VILLA
SCARFACE	VOLGA BOATMAN
SEA BEAST	WAY DOWN EAST
SECRETS	WHEN KNIGHTHOOD WAS IN FLOWER

It is interesting to find that the persons most anxious to see pictures about war are those who are most likely to do the fighting — men between the ages of eighteen and thirty. It is their mothers, wives, sweethearts and sisters who are least interested. This finding parallels our experience with magazine fiction. In the past we have found that war itself, as the subject of a story, is inherently interesting to male readers. It is not, of course, a subject of basic appeal to women, but women will accept a story in which war is only the *background*.

Fiction dependent upon interest in war itself is not being read by women, but is being read by a very healthy proportion of men. Fiction in which war is only the background is still popular with women.

This is another problem in which over-simplified generalization is bound to lead to a faulty conclusion. There is no *class* of fiction, and no *class* of motion picture, which is either infallibly successful or infallibly unsuccessful. It always depends on the particular story. You cannot say either that the public *wants* war subjects or doesn't want them. It all depends on the individual story.

Comic Strips

June, 1941.

Don't take the newspaper 'circulations' of comic strips too literally. Their *net readership* — the percentage of persons reading the newspapers who actually read that comic strip — is far more significant. Furthermore, the factor of *time* is important. It takes years for a comic strip to accumulate its peak following.

In a nation-wide survey we asked a representative cross-section of theatergoers: "Which of the newspaper comic strips do you think would make a good movie?" Four thousand eight hundred persons were interviewed, and the voting was as follows:

Blondie	596	Skippy	25
L'il Abner	479	Prince Valiant	25
Dick Tracy	340	Buck Rogers	25
Superman	240	Ben Webster	24
Bringing Up Father	220	Flying Jimmy Dare	23
Orphan Annie	164	Flying Jenny	23
Terry and the Pirates	153	Barney Google	22
Smiling Jack	141	Cap Stubbs	21
Boots and her Buddies	124	Smitty	21
Joe Palooka	117	Fritzi Ritz	20
Tillie the Toiler	115	Annie Rooney	20
Gasoline Alley	115		
Jane Arden	101	Nancy	19
		Ned Brant	19
Flash Gordon	96	Mary Worth's Family	15
Abbie and Slats	82	Chief Wahoo	14
Dixie Dugan	81	Don Winslow	12
Wash Tubbs	71	Dickie Dare	11
Mutt and Jeff	70	Secret Agent X-9	11
Winnie Winkle	67	Joe Jinks	11
Freckles	67	Benny Baxter	10
Popeye	63	Pa Perkins	
The Phantom	62	[Polly and Her Pals]	10
Moon Mullins	60	Jungle Jim	10
Katzenjammer Kids	55		
Ella Cinders	52	The Bungles	9
Ally Oop	50	Timid Soul	8
Harold Teen	50	Tiny Tim	8
Toots and Casper	46	Invisible Scarlett O'Neill	7
The Gumps	46	Clarence	7
Henry	36	Lone Ranger	7
		Bat Man	7
Mandrake	35	Tailspin Tommy	6
Out Our Way	34	Ripple Family	6
Mickey Finn	32	Dick Draper	6
Tarzan	31	Little Miss Muffet	5
Etta Kett	30	Big Sister	5
Dan Dunn	30	Little King	5
Apple Mary	29	J. Autry	5
Major Hoople	29	Scorchy Smith	5
Mr. & Mrs.	26	Captain and the Kids	5
The Nebbs	26	Hap Hopper	5
Tim Tyler	26		
Red Ryder	26		
Brick Bradford	26		

CHAPTER V

The Selection of Titles

THE INSTITUTE has found that, on the average, one person in every five entering a theater knows nothing about the picture except what appears on the marquee, i.e., the *cast* and the *title*. On the basis of this evidence alone it would appear that titles cannot be written off as unimportant.

Audience research makes it possible to remove the problem of title selection from the realm of guess-work and argument. By exposing all titles to the prior scrutiny of the ticket-buying public you insure that the title you finally select is the best one for the job.

In this way audience research not only saves hours of executive time but also eliminates the very considerable expense attendant upon last-minute changes of title.

The procedure is to determine the relative pulling power of the various titles under consideration, first isolated from all other elements, then combined with cast. In addition, respondents are asked: "Just judging from this title, what do you think the picture would be about?"

Sometimes it happens that the title with the greatest intrinsic pulling power is so misleading in its implications that a title with slightly less pulling power is finally recommended. For example, the Institute tested two titles for a musical picture, *STREET GIRL* or *FOUR JACKS AND A QUEEN*. Of the two, *STREET GIRL* was found to possess the greater pulling power, but almost 50 per cent of the persons interviewed admitted that they thought the picture would be about a prostitute.

II.

When the RKO sales force began to criticize the title *THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER*, somebody proposed *THE GREATEST BARGAIN* as an

alternative. The Institute found that *THE GREATEST BARGAIN* was immensely strong in appeal to female theatergoers, and correspondingly weak with males, but subsequent questioning revealed a widespread inference that any picture with this title must be about a department store!

The final title selected [without any pre-testing at all] was *ALL THAT MONEY CAN BUY*. The Institute subsequently found that the theatergoers who like this type of picture are the last ones to take an interest in this title. Conversely, the theatergoers who are attracted by the title *ALL THAT MONEY CAN BUY* are the ones who least appreciate this picture.

III.

When the Institute tested the relative pulling power of nine titles submitted by RKO for *NO MORE GAS* [the Nordhoff & Hall story], *TOMORROW NEVER COMES* received almost as twice many votes as its nearest competitor. It is one of those rare titles which means all things to all people.

Next in order of voting came two of the Tahiti titles, but here again the implication was misleading. To most theatergoers Tahiti seemed to mean a *sarong* type of picture — Dorothy Lamour, etc. We have found that such pictures appeal most strongly to the poor and to the young, whereas Laughton and the Nordhoff & Hall story appeal to the rich and to the old. *Ergo*, if your title contained any reference to Tahiti, it would alienate the picture's best friends.

The title *TROUBLE IN TAHITI* suffered from another handicap: many persons thought that it would be about international intrigue in the Pacific.

IV.

In some cases it is necessary to find out whether the public understands the meaning of the words used in the title. For example, after RKO selected the title *SYNCOPE*, the Institute found that 43 per cent of all theatergoers had no idea what the word 'syncopation' meant. Among persons under eighteen years, 62 per cent were unable to define the word; among those in the lowest income-group the percentage was the same.

Typical of their definitions are the following:

"Does it mean sympathy?"

"Is it some kinda religion?"

"Synchronize."

"Fast action — a little faster than usual."

"Co-ordinating."

"Something about love."

"It has something to do with sin."

"Hot-love."

"Infatuation or something like that."

V.

Sometimes it is also necessary to make sure that the customers can *pronounce* the proposed title without undue difficulty or embarrassment. For example, the Institute found that few persons agree on the pronunciation of the title *GWANGI*.

60 per cent pronounce the second G hard, as in 'gone'

40 per cent pronounce the second G soft, as in 'gee'

56 per cent pronounce the A broad, as in 'marble'

44 per cent pronounce the A flat, as in 'hat'

There is reason to believe that titles which are difficult to pronounce form a serious impediment to the snowball word-of-mouth publicity.*

The Institute has found that a poor title also has an adverse influence on a picture's publicity penetration.

* Cf. also, and obviously, *BALALAIKA*, *NINOTCHKA*, *JUAREZ* and *CYRANO DE BERGERAC*.

Summary of Title Tests

[In each case the winning title is assigned the value of 100]

TOMORROW NEVER COMES	100	THREE FOR A WEDDING	100
HOLIDAY IN TAHITI	54	BEST GIRL	80
TROUBLE IN TAHITI	51	A GIRL A GUY & A GOB	79 *
OUT OF GAS	49		
THE MAN FROM TAHITI	38		
THE GAY TUTTLES	38	WOMEN ARE POISON	100
SPENDTHRIFT	33	MADISON SQUARE GARDEN	89
THE INCREDIBLE TUTTLES	27	RINGSIDE	80
THE TUTTLES OF TAHITI	23 *		
THE MORTGAGE LIFTER	13		
		THEY KNEW WHAT THEY	
THE DEVIL & DANIEL		WANTED	100 *
WEBSTER	100	THE OTHER MAN	72
THE DEVIL TO PAY	98		
MR. SCRATCH	74		
HERE IS A MAN	71	YOU CAN'T BE TOO	
ALL THAT MONEY CAN BUY	69 *	CAREFUL	100
THE GREATEST BARGAIN	67	LUCKY PARTNERS	92 *
CALIFORNIA	100	THE BAND PLAYED ON	100
BLIND STALLION	65	SYNCOPIATION	27 *
BRED IN CALIFORNIA	57		
BLOOD WILL TELL	30		
PHOTO FINISH	20	SUSPICION	100 *
CLASS WILL TELL	19	BEFORE THE FACT	54
TRUE TO FORM	18		
I'M STILL ALIVE	100 *	STREET GIRL	100
NINE LIVES	93	FOUR JACKS AND A QUEEN	61 *
PROFESSIONAL HERO	90		
STUNT MAN	50		
PALM BEACH SPECIAL	100	THE LAST TRAIN FROM	
FLORIDA SPECIAL	97	PARIS	100
MY LIFE WITH CAROLINE	84 *	FAREWELL TO FRANCE	97
FOR THE LOVE OF CAROLINE	81	PASSAGE FROM BORDEAUX	86

* Title finally selected by RKO.

CHAPTER VI

Index of Publicity Penetration

EVERY week the Institute has measured the number of *theatergoers* who have heard about the pictures shortly due for release, and also the number who want to see them. These two factors in combination have been found to yield a highly accurate prediction of the actual box-office performance of the pictures concerned.

Ten pictures have been measured every week, each picture being kept on the Index for approximately three weeks prior to its release, and two weeks thereafter. The more important RKO pictures are measured for as many as ten weeks prior to their release.

Respondents are asked whether they have heard or read anything about each picture. If, for example, they say they have heard about *A YANK IN THE R.A.F.*, they are next called upon to *prove* that they have heard about this picture. Can they name the star or stars? What else have they heard about the picture? *Where* did they hear or read about it? Do they want to see it?

On the basis of the replies to these questions, we are able to determine not only the actual percentage of ticket-buyers who have been reached by the pre-release advertising and publicity for each picture, but also to estimate its theater gross * with an average deviation of six points — a deviation which is remarkably low having regard to the fact that the weather, the character of the competition and holiday bookings can have such a profound effect on a picture's box-office performance. Such factors are not taken into account in making these predictions.

It must also be borne in mind that, in evaluating the accuracy of our box-office predictions, we have had to rely upon the classification of the RKO Theater Department — the only yardstick available to us.

* The reader will appreciate the impossibility of predicting the gross to the *picture company* when such gross is a function not only of the number of persons who see the picture but also of the terms upon which it is sold.

That Classification is not entirely satisfactory, for a variety of reasons. For example, in some cases its figures are based on a sample of only five theaters. In many other cases its figures are distorted by the absence of small town situations, whereas — until recently — our predictions were always based on a cross-section of the entire ticket-buying public, including the right proportion of small town situations. Recently we have thought it advisable to modify our cross-section to conform more closely with the coverage of the RKO Theater Department; and our earlier predictions have been adjusted accordingly. [See table on following page.]

II.

Interviewing for the weekly Index begins on Tuesday and is completed on Saturday. Final returns are tabulated and telegraphed to the picture company on Tuesday afternoon.

The value of this service may be summarized as follows:

- 1) The Index tells you, with a relatively high degree of accuracy, what business your pictures and your competitors' pictures are going to do at the box-office.
- 2) The Index places on your desk, every week, an accurate measurement of the actual results achieved by your expenditure on advertising and publicity. For the first time you can judge the effectiveness of every campaign on the only fair basis — cost per thousand ticket-buyers reached.
- 3) By reporting both the publicity penetration and the want-to-see vote, the Index places the credit for box-office success in the right proportions as between the studio and the publicity department.
- 4) The Index exposes inadequate penetration in time for you to apply the necessary remedies. For example, if you learn two weeks before your picture goes into general release that only one theatergoer in seven is aware of its existence [that is the average for all A pictures distributed by RKO], there is still time for you to save the day. We cannot over-emphasize the importance of setting up your advertising

BOX-OFFICE PREDICTIONS BEFORE GENERAL RELEASE						
	Publicity Penetration Week Before Release	+ or — Average	% of Those Having Heard of Picture Who Want- to-See It	+ or — Average	ARI Prediction	Actual Per- formance in RKO Theaters
	%		%		%	%
CAUGHT IN THE DRAFT	52	+ 28	86	+ 18	149	149
PHILADELPHIA STORY	48	+ 24	84	+ 16	144	144
A YANK IN THE R.A.F.	44	+ 20	83	+ 15	140	136
KITTY FOYLE	46	+ 22	78	+ 10	135	140
KNUTE ROCKNE	32	+ 8	82	+ 14	131	124
THE LITTLE FOXES	39	+ 15	78	+ 10	130	138
ZIEGFELD GIRL	47	+ 23	73	+ 5	129	120
NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH	26	+ 2	84	+ 16	129	121
BIRTH OF THE BLUES	30	+ 6	81	+ 13	128	128
CITIZEN KANE	51	+ 27	68	0	125	120
TOM DICK & HARRY	35	+ 11	75	+ 7	123	120
SUSPICION	19	— 5	82	+ 14	122	130
DIVE BOMBER	31	+ 7	75	+ 7	121	126
MR. & MRS. SMITH	22	— 2	76	+ 8	116	116
BILLY THE KID	33	+ 9	70	+ 2	115	115
THIEF OF BAGDAD	28	+ 4	69	+ 1	111	109
THE WESTERNER	28	+ 4	68	0	109	116
KISS THE BOYS GOODBYE	29	+ 5	67	— 1	109	90
RELUCTANT DRAGON	26	+ 2	67	— 1	107	88
LUCKY PARTNERS	17	— 7	72	+ 4	107	93
THEY MET IN BOMBAY	19	— 5	70	+ 2	106	109
MEET JOHN DOE	29	+ 5	65	— 3	106	105
PENNY SERENADE	28	+ 4	65	— 3	105	116
MAN HUNT	9	— 15	74	+ 6	105	102
NAVY BLUES	22	— 2	67	— 1	104	100
YOU'LL NEVER GET RICH	17	— 7	68	0	102	123
COME LIVE WITH ME	18	— 6	67	— 1	101	101
UNFINISHED BUSINESS	14	— 10	67	— 1	99	106
SHEPHERD OF THE HILLS	19	— 5	64	— 4	98	103
MOON OVER MIAMI	20	— 4	63	— 5	97	100
MY LIFE WITH CAROLINE	11	— 13	66	— 2	95	99
YOU'LL FIND OUT	9	— 15	67	— 1	95	94
SUNNY	21	— 3	61	— 7	95	74
THAT NIGHT IN RIO	15	— 9	63	— 5	94	89
THEY KNEW WHAT THEY WANTED	13	— 11	63	— 5	93	82
THE DEVIL & MISS JONES	4	— 20	60	— 8	83	92
NO, NO, NANETTE	11	— 13	54	— 14	79	80

The research procedures employed by AUDIENCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE are validated every time its box-office predictions are proved accurate.

Notice that the most serious deviations arise in cases where pictures have turned out so far below expectation that they have subsequently been relegated to inferior playing time, etc.

schedule so that, in such cases, you will be in a position to lay down an 'emergency barrage' of paid advertising in key metropolitan newspapers.

- 5) The Index enables you to put the calipers on such costly publicity stunts as special world premieres of the kind made famous by UNION PACIFIC, DODGE CITY and VIRGINIA CITY. [It has been found that the effect of these premieres is concentrated in their immediate vicinity — Nevada, Michigan, Georgia, or wherever it may be.]

III.

There is a tradition that no amount of publicity can sell a bad picture, and that no good picture can fail from lack of publicity. The Institute's studies have proved that this tradition over-simplifies the truth. The fact is that advertising can make a good picture even more successful. And it can make a bad picture less of a failure.

We can cite a dozen recent pictures whose box-office chances have been impaired by inadequate publicity penetration. THE DEVIL AND MISS JONES is one conspicuous example. Seven days before release that picture's penetration stood at only 4 per cent, whereas its want-to-see vote was almost normal. *If the pre-release publicity penetration on THE DEVIL AND MISS JONES had reached the average for A pictures [24 per cent], the Jean Arthur picture would have grossed at least \$100,000 more than it did.*

Examples of the opposite situation, where an abnormally high publicity penetration has turned a picture with only average acceptance value into a big grosser, include THE GREAT DICTATOR and CITIZEN KANE. Tests revealed only a moderate acceptance value for CITIZEN KANE, and even after its release the percentage of persons who wanted-to-see this picture was only average. *The explanation for such business as CITIZEN KANE finally did lay in the fact that the picture achieved a higher pre-release penetration than any RKO picture previously measured.*

IV.

Analysis of the sixty most recent Indices of Publicity Penetration reveals that the average audience acceptance value of RKO pictures released during the past year has actually been above the industry average in the prosperous income-group and in the upper age-group. It is with the lower income-groups and the lower age-groups that RKO pictures have been below average in acceptance.

- 1) The average 'want-to-see' vote for RKO pictures is above the industry average with persons over thirty years, but below the industry average with the younger age-groups.*

WANT-TO-SEE BY AGE-GROUPS				
	12-17	18-30	31-up	Total
	%	%	%	%
All Pictures	73.4	67.8	65.6	68.5
RKO Pictures	67.6	65.7	66.6	66.3
Difference	-5.8	-2.1	+1.0	-2.2

Although the want-to-see vote for RKO pictures is greatest in the youngest age-group, it is in this group that RKO pictures have their *relatively weakest* appeal.

- 2) The average want-to-see vote for RKO pictures is above the industry average in the 'prosperous' income-group, but below average in the lower income-groups.†

WANT-TO-SEE BY INCOME-GROUPS					
	Prosperous	Upper-Middle	Lower-Middle	Poor	Total
	%	%	%	%	%
All Pictures	66.7	66.3	70.0	70.9	68.5
RKO Pictures	67.1	64.1	68.0	66.7	66.3
Difference	+0.4	-2.2	-2.0	-4.2	-2.2

* Only 35 per cent of all tickets are purchased by persons over thirty.

† Only 12 per cent of all tickets are purchased by persons in the 'prosperous' income-group.

- 3) The average want-to-see vote of RKO pictures is almost up to the industry average in cities with a population in excess of 500,000, but below average elsewhere.

WANT-TO-SEE BY SIZE OF CITY					
	<i>Under</i> 10,000 %	10,000- 100,000 %	100,000- 500,000 %	<i>Over</i> 500,000 %	<i>Total</i> %
All Pictures	70.5	70.6	67.8	67.6	68.5
RKO Pictures	67.3	67.2	64.8	66.6	66.3
Difference	<u>-3.2</u>	<u>-3.4</u>	<u>-3.0</u>	<u>-1.0</u>	<u>-2.2</u>

- 4) The average publicity penetration of RKO pictures is below the industry average in all age-groups, and is relatively weakest in the younger age-groups.

PUBLICITY PENETRATION BY AGE-GROUPS				
	12-17 %	18-30 %	31-up %	<i>Total</i> %
All Pictures	31.7	32.7	27.3	31.1
RKO Pictures	25.0	26.9	23.4	25.6
Difference	<u>-6.7</u>	<u>-5.8</u>	<u>-3.9</u>	<u>-5.5</u>

If the average publicity penetration of RKO pictures is somewhat below the industry average, it must be remembered that those responsible for RKO advertising and publicity operate under certain handicaps. For example, it is easier for MGM to secure high penetrations for their pictures, which generally boast big marquee names, than it is for RKO to secure high penetrations for their pictures, which often lack such publicity naturals. Again, it is difficult for RKO to achieve high penetrations when titles are changed a few weeks prior to release [e. g. *SUSPICION* and *ALL THAT MONEY CAN BUY*]. Lastly, it is unfair to compare the penetration of a campaign which has cost \$50,000 with the penetration of a campaign which has cost \$100,000.

- 5) The average publicity penetration of RKO pictures is below the industry average in all income-groups, and is relatively weakest in the poorer income-groups.

PUBLICITY PENETRATION BY INCOME-GROUPS					
	<i>Prosperous</i> %	<i>Upper- Middle</i> %	<i>Lower- Middle</i> %	<i>Poor</i> %	<i>Total</i> %
All Pictures	35.8	34.2	30.6	26.1	31.1
RKO Pictures	31.2	28.5	24.7	20.5	25.6
Difference	—4.6	—5.7	—5.9	—5.6	—5.5

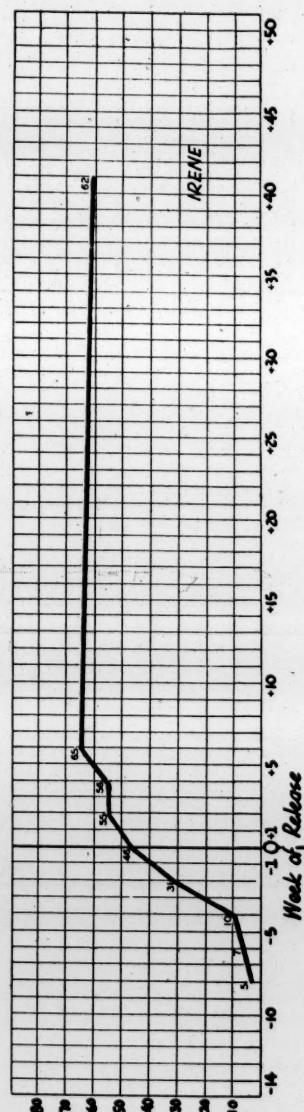
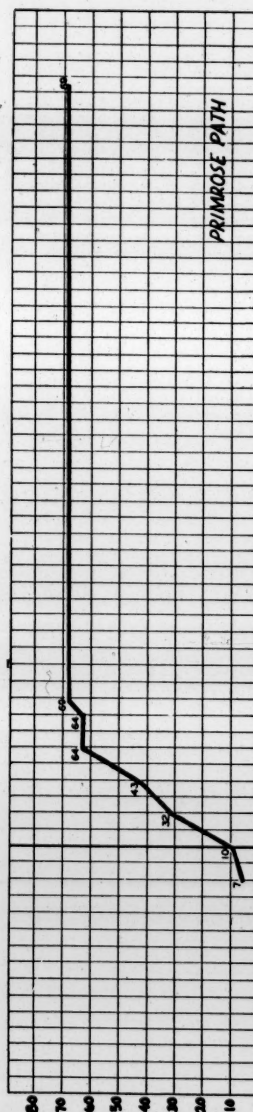
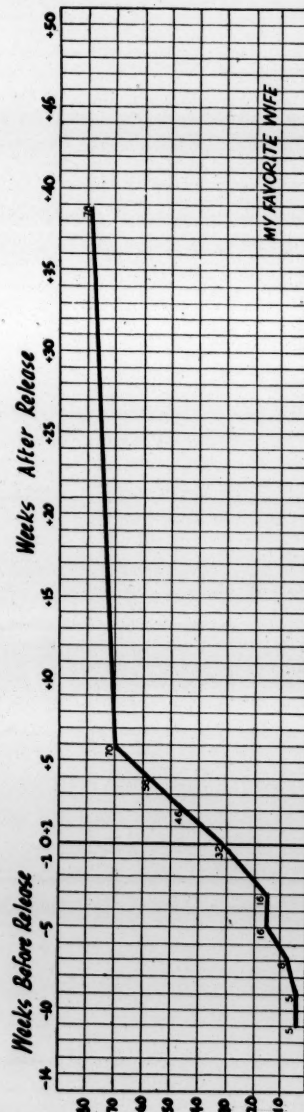
As might be expected, the average penetration for all pictures is definitely correlated with income — the higher the income, the greater the penetration. The penetration is much higher with the prosperous and upper-middle economic groups.

It is interesting that the penetration of RKO pictures, as compared to that of pictures of other studios, is relatively *more* successful with the prosperous group and *least* successful with the economic segments in which the greatest number of ticket-buyers are found.

- 6) The Institute has demonstrated that almost all publicity and advertising campaigns begin too late. Analysis of the sixty most recent Indices yields the following averages for A pictures:

PUBLICITY PENETRATION BY WEEKS							
	<i>Weeks Before Release</i>				<i>Weeks After Release</i>		
	3	2	1	0	1	2	3
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
All Pictures	16.6	20.8	24.3	30.1	37.1	42.4	46.4
RKO Pictures	12.9	15.2	16.8	24.5	32.4	36.7	40.4
Difference	—3.7	—5.6	—7.5	—5.6	—4.7	—5.7	—6.0

PUBLICITY PENETRATION OVER TWELVE MONTHS



The publicity penetration of these three pictures was as high nine months after their release as it was two months after their release. Notice that My Favorite Wife and PRIMROSE PATH did not achieve any significant penetration until they had already played their most lucrative situations. The resultant cash loss to RKO was substantial.

V.

The average publicity penetration of all A pictures one week before release is 24 per cent,* which means that only one theatergoer in every four is reached by pre-release publicity. [These figures refer to that segment of the population which goes to the movies once a month or more. On a straight population basis the average penetration is ever lower.] It is only in such exceptional cases as KITTY FOYLE, SERGEANT YORK, CITIZEN KANE and THE GREAT DICTATOR that as many as *half* the ticket-buying public gets to know about a picture before it is released.

These facts place a considerable share of the blame for the industry's doldrums at the door of the publicity departments and the advertising agencies. On almost *all* campaigns the verdict must be: TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE and TOO STEREOTYPED.

VI.

During recent years, the Institute has had unprecedented opportunities for studying the end-results of motion picture advertising. On the following pages we suggest six specific remedies which are calculated to improve the present unsatisfactory state of affairs.

1) If it is to achieve its maximum gross, a picture must cross the release line with the highest possible penetration. *To do that means starting the campaign at least six weeks earlier than is now the accepted custom.*

How can this be accomplished? Use smaller and cheaper space units than you have been accustomed to using, and spread them over a longer period of time. You will not only be able to start your campaigns earlier, but you will also reach *more readers — at no extra cost.*

2) It is imperative to blanket the easiest-to-sell market. Although producers always hope that their pictures will interest every theatergoer in the country, only one picture — GONE WITH THE WIND — has

* 17 per cent in the case of RKO pictures.

come anywhere near to accomplishing this feat in recent years. Some pictures are of particular interest to men and to boys, others to women. Some are particularly interesting to city dwellers, others to rural people — and so on.

For example, the audiences for REBECCA were 71 per cent female, while the audiences for THE FIGHTING 69TH were only 38 per cent female. The *age* composition of audiences likewise varies widely from picture to picture. BABES IN ARMS attracted 33 per cent more than the normal proportion of children between the ages of twelve and seventeen. By contrast, the audiences for ABE LINCOLN IN ILLINOIS were 28 per cent above normal in their proportion of persons over *thirty-one years* of age. There is an even greater variation in the composition of audiences by income-groups. Thus the proportion of the 'prosperous' in the audiences for MY FAVORITE WIFE was 55 per cent *above* normal, while the proportion of 'prosperous' in the audiences for ROAD TO SINGAPORE was 33 per cent *below* normal.

By refusing to admit, even to themselves, the fact that no picture has a universal appeal, advertising executives waste millions of dollars in reaching the *hardest-to-sell* group, without, at the same time, applying sufficient pressure on the *easiest-to-sell* group.

Hitherto, no attempt has been made in a systematic way to find out which groups will be most interested in any given picture. Once you know exactly which segments of the population are the easiest-to-sell for that picture, then the media which will deliver the largest number of persons in that segment, at the lowest cost, can be determined.

3) No media schedule should be decided until the following basic question has been answered: What is the relative cost per thousand of reaching the easiest-to-sell groups on this picture —

by magazines?

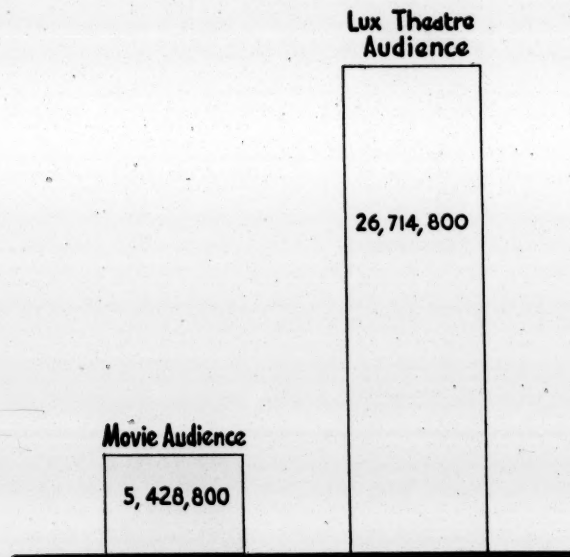
by newspapers?

by spot radio?

by network radio? [See following chart]

MONDAY

1940



Compare the number of persons who attend motion picture theaters on any one day with the number who listen to the radio. For example, almost five times as many persons listen to this one radio program on Monday evening as go to all the theaters in the U. S. all day on Monday — morning, afternoon and evening. Similar charts could be made for every day in the week.

4) Just as no serious attempt is ever made to find out what segments of the population are easiest-to-sell, so no serious attempt is made to find out *what it is* about any given picture that is most likely to get people into the theaters. Advertising executives are apparently content to *guess* what it is about their pictures which will most interest the public. Such guesses may or may not coincide with the public's ideas. Sometimes they do. Sometimes they don't.

Before the Detroit automobile manufacturers start advertising their new models, they use research to find out which features in that model will find the readiest acceptance with the motoring public. It is those features which are stressed in the advertising. Such pre-testing of sales appeals is axiomatic in a dozen different industries.

There is no real reason why motion picture companies should not follow this procedure. It has very definite advantages — in terms of sales — over the old-fashioned reliance upon the hunch, the guess-work and the personal opinions of advertising copy-writers.

5) Our studies have shown that motion picture advertising starts with greater 'product interest' than any other advertising. That is to say, a far higher percentage of people are interested in knowing about forthcoming pictures than are interested in knowing about new washing machines or new soap. For this reason the fact that an advertisement for a motion picture has the highest reading of any advertisement in a magazine such as LIFE or SATURDAY EVENING POST is no proof of its excellence; even picture ads of mediocre quality achieve this measure of success.

If you will make certain technical changes in your advertisements, you can increase the number of persons who read them by at least 100 per cent. Which means, in effect, that you can make your advertisements deliver twice the penetration they are now delivering — at *no extra cost*.

[To describe these technical improvements would require at least another volume as long as this one. And as a purely fact-finding organization, it is not the function of the Institute to offer specialized advice in the field of advertising.]

6) In addition to cooperative advertising on the amusement page of newspapers, set aside part of your budget for space on those pages which are read by the less-frequent theatergoers. In terms of total number of readers, the amusement page ranks only fifth. *The amusement page carries 33 per cent less traffic than the best-read pages*. In total readership the amusement page is outranked by the picture pages, comic pages, editorial pages, sport pages [men] and the society pages [women].

In the light of these facts, confining your advertising entirely to the amusement page looks somewhat unambitious. What is more, the persons who read this page are likely to be those who are shopping for a movie anyway. You will secure higher penetrations if you spend *part* of your advertising budget for a given picture on those pages which are read by people who are *not* shopping for a movie.

VII.

In addition to measuring pre-release penetrations, the Institute also studies the quality of word-of-mouth publicity after the first few customers have seen the picture. One procedure is to ask the first people who see each picture whether they enjoyed it *more* or *less* than they had expected to. Here are the results of asking this question about ten pictures:

	<i>Per Cent Who Enjoyed Picture LESS Than They Expected</i>
GREAT AMERICAN BROADCAST	28
THAT NIGHT IN RIO	28
CITIZEN KANE	27
PENNY SERENADE	23
MEET JOHN DOE	23
ZIEGFELD GIRL	22
A GIRL A GUY AND A GOB	20
ROAD TO ZANZIBAR	19
FANTASIA	17
THE DEVIL AND MISS JONES	15

This table provides a fair index of the quality, as distinct from the quantity, of the word-of-mouth for the pictures concerned. Thus, while the publicity penetration for CITIZEN KANE was exceptionally high, the picture was apparently injured by unfavorable word-of-mouth after the first few people had seen it. This inference was confirmed when KANE's 'want-to-see' vote began to decline.

INDEX OF PUBLICITY PENETRATION LXXI

Week Ending October 25, 1941

	PUBLICITY PENETRATION			Percentage of Those Having Heard of Picture Who Want to See It + or - Average
	New York Area	All Areas Where Picture Had Not Opened	+ or - Average for P.P. One Week Before Release	
SMILIN' THROUGH	% 46	% 32	% +8	% -2
DUMBO	Opened	19	-5	74 +6
ALL THAT MONEY CAN BUY	Opened	17	-7	69 +1
WEEK-END IN HAVANA	22	16	Released	74 +6
ONE FOOT IN HEAVEN	24	15	-9	Insufficient Cases
THE GAY FALCON	Opened	5	-19	64 -4
NEW YORK TOWN	7	5	-19	Insufficient Cases
APPOINTMENT FOR LOVE	7	5	-19	Insufficient Cases
SUSPICION	5	2	-22	Insufficient Cases

SMILIN' THROUGH is an interesting case—a picture with a want-to-see vote below average which, thanks to a relatively high publicity penetration, should do fairly well at the box-office.

The want-to-see vote for DUMBO increased 2 per cent over last week. An even higher want-to-see vote is indicated.

The penetration for APPOINTMENT FOR LOVE remains surprisingly low. Universal's publicity apparently has missed the boat on this picture both in New York and throughout the country.

ALL THAT MONEY CAN BUY gained 9 points in publicity penetration during the past week. Apparently the current publicity campaign is only now beginning to take effect.

The low penetration for SUSPICION is disquieting, having regard to this picture's imminent release. No doubt the advertising campaign in national magazines, which is just getting under way, will yield a satisfactory penetration. But readers of Report LXIX, WHEN SHOULD PUBLICITY START? may draw the conclusion that the campaign for SUSPICION is beginning dangerously late.

INDEX OF PUBLICITY PENETRATION LXXII

Week Ending November 1, 1941

	PUBLICITY PENETRATION			Percentage of Those Having Heard of Picture Who Want to See It + or - Average
	New York Area	All Areas Where Picture Had Not Opened	+ or - Average for P.P. One Week Before Release	
BIRTH OF THE BLUES	% 32	% 23	% -1	% +9
DUMBO	Opened	22	-2	73 +5
ALL THAT MONEY CAN BUY	Opened	19	Released	70 +2
ONE FOOT IN HEAVEN	24	18	-6	70 +2
THE FEMININE TOUCH	11	15	Released	Insufficient Cases
APPOINTMENT FOR LOVE	13	9	-15	Insufficient Cases
NEW YORK TOWN	10	9	-15	Insufficient Cases
SUSPICION	5	3	-21	Insufficient Cases
WEEK-END FOR THREE	Opened	3	-21	Insufficient Cases

Although the publicity penetration for DUMBO is *now* only 3 per cent greater than for ALL THAT MONEY CAN BUY, there was a very large difference between the penetrations of these pictures *prior to their release*. One week before release Dumbo had 22 per cent, which is only 2 points below the average for A pictures; whereas ALL THAT MONEY CAN BUY registered only 8 per cent one week before its release, which is 16 points below average. Apparently the advertising campaign for ALL THAT MONEY CAN BUY began too late.

WEEK-END FOR THREE seems to have opened almost cold in New York City. Even after playing at the Palace for one week, this picture's penetration in New York City is only 14 per cent, which means that only one

theatergoer in every seven has heard of it. For the rest of the country the figure is only 2 per cent.

The publicity penetration for SUSPICION is still dangerously low but no doubt it will gather momentum as the magazine advertisements begin to build up circulation. It is to be hoped that the release of SUSPICION can be postponed until the picture has achieved a publicity penetration of at least 45 per cent—a figure which was exceeded by KITTY FOYLE, DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE, SERGEANT YORK, CITIZEN KANE, ZIEGFELD GIRL, PHILADELPHIA STORY and CAUGHT IN THE DRAFT. At present the publicity penetration of SUSPICION is only 5 per cent for New York and 3 per cent for the rest of the country.

CHAPTER VII

Public Relations

"WITH PUBLIC OPINION on its side," said Abraham Lincoln in the course of his famous contest with Douglas, "everything succeeds. With public opinion against it, nothing succeeds."

The management of a large motion picture corporation is confronted with many problems of policy which intimately concern public opinion, but which are not directly connected with the production of individual pictures.

For example, what is the attitude of the public toward anti-Nazi propaganda? What is the attitude of the public toward censorship? How does the public react to the political and moral eccentricities of certain stars? Does the public consider that stars are paid too much? To what extent does the public react to anti-Semitic propaganda aimed at Hollywood?

Then there are the problems which affect the theater-owning affiliates of major companies. For example, a knowledge of the day-to-day routine of ordinary theatergoers should be helpful. What time do people eat their evening meal? What time do they go to bed? In what situation, if any, is a single feature policy indicated?

Then there are newsreels. Do theatergoers want bathing beauties, horse races, fashions? Do they want more war footage?

How about the public relations of individual companies? Does the RKO trademark mean anything to the public? Which companies are rated highest?

In thousands of conversations with the men and women ticket-buyers of America, these problems are exposed to the public by the Institute's trained interviewers.

The following pages contain a brief selection of some of the major issues on which public opinion has been measured in the last two years. Each of these results must be interpreted in the light of the specific question asked, and, above all, against the background of the actual date of the survey.

Newsreels

October, 1941.

In a nation-wide survey the Institute measured the attitude of theatergoers toward the newsreels. The questions asked were those suggested by Mr. George J. Schaefer.

1) Which, if any, of the newsreels do you prefer?

We find that 34 per cent cannot recall the name of any newsreel. Those who are able to do so vote as follows:

	%
PARAMOUNT	16
MOVIETONE	13
PATHE	9
OTHERS	5
NO PREFERENCE	23

Notice that 57 per cent of all theatergoers either cannot recall the name of any newsreel, or are without an opinion as to which is the best. Many others admit that the newsreel selected is the only one they can remember. So far as the majority of theatergoers is concerned, all newsreels seem to be pretty much the same; there is little comparative criticism or discrimination.

2) With what newsreel do you associate the rooster?

	%
PATHE	49
MOVIETONE	3
PARAMOUNT	3
OTHERS	4
DON'T KNOW	41

3) Do you believe the newsreels carry too much or too little war material?

[October, 1941]

	<i>Too Much</i>	<i>Too Little</i>	<i>About Right</i>
	%	%	%
All persons interviewed	35	22	43
Males	25	30	45
Females	44	14	42

Forty-eight per cent of those who think that newsreels carry too much war material give as their reason that war is too unpleasant. Many respondents say that they have sons, sweethearts or other relatives in the army, and they therefore hate being reminded of the realities of war. Only 8 per cent of those who think that newsreels carry too much war material give a reason in terms of propaganda — which is only 3 per cent of all persons interviewed. [See page 128.]

4) Which of the following newsreel subjects do you like?

[October, 1941]

	<i>Like</i>
	<i>%</i>
FOOTBALL GAMES	77
NATIONAL DEFENSE	77
WAR PICTURES	62
BEAUTY CONTESTS	52
HORSE RACES	48
FASHION SHOWS	47

There are some remarkable differences in the vote of males and females, as may be seen from the following figures:

	<i>Liked by</i>	<i>Liked by</i>
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
FOOTBALL GAMES	82	73
NATIONAL DEFENSE	88	66
WAR PICTURES	71	52
BEAUTY CONTESTS	27	76
HORSE RACES	57	40
FASHION SHOWS	20	73

Perhaps the most startling feature of these results is the fact that beauty contests should emerge more popular with females than with males. However, this finding is in line with all our discoveries as to the importance of self-identification in the field of motion pictures.

The low vote for horse races is significant. We have previously found that this subject interests the theatergoing public less than it interests the motion picture community in Hollywood. When respondents were asked whether they followed the news [in newspapers] on baseball, football, horse racing and tennis, results were as follows:

[February, 1941]

	%
FOOTBALL	33
BASEBALL	24
TENNIS	9
HORSE RACING	8

In another survey 63 per cent of all persons interviewed said they had never attended a horse race in all their lives. In response to another question, 82 per cent said that they had not placed any wager on the result of a horse race during the past year.

Length of Features

May, 1941.

This is one of those issues, like the Gold Standard, upon which the ordinary layman is scarcely qualified to vote. As a result, we keep getting large No Opinion votes.

In this particular survey we asked a representative cross-section of all theatergoers: "In general, do you think that movie programs are too long or too short?" Sixty per cent said they thought programs "about right" — the typical majority which supports the *status quo* on such questions. Thirty-four per cent said "too long," and only 6 per cent "too short." But most of those who said "too long" were found to be single feature addicts, so we deduce that their vote for shorter programs was little more than a vote against double features.

This deduction was confirmed when we asked: "How about the individual pictures? Do you think that the average feature picture is too long or too short?" Only 4 per cent replied "too long," while 9 per cent replied "too short," and the great mass — 87 per cent — said "about right."

As a sidelight on this problem, it may interest the reader to hear that no less than 32 per cent of all theatergoers believe that on a double feature program at least one of the pictures is condensed or cut.

Double Features

August, 1940.

Double features are more popular than single features among New Englanders, among persons living in big cities [New York, for example], among persons under 18 years of age, among persons in the lower income levels and among persons who live in communities which have grown accustomed to double features. As the following table indicates, the youngest age-group, composed of youngsters six to twelve, votes for double features by a ratio of more than three to one.

The results of this poll go a long way toward explaining a seeming paradox in the motion picture industry. Theater owners have long known that most people say they prefer single features; yet when individual exhibitors have changed from a double to a single policy, their business has declined. Theaters which draw a large part of their business from children and the poorer classes, and theaters located in a part of the country which favors double features, would obviously suffer by changing to single features, particularly if the single features are not of sufficient quality to attract customers in the higher age and income levels.

	<i>For Single Features</i>	<i>For Double Features</i>
	%	%
Ages 6 to 12	23	77
Ages 13 to 17	42	58
Ages 18 to 24	60	40
Ages 25 up	68	32

This variation by age-groups is the more important in light of the fact that 65 per cent of the theater admissions each week throughout the nation are accounted for by persons under 30 years of age.

The lower income levels vote in favor of doubles whereas the upper income-groups vote against them.

	<i>For Single Features</i>	<i>For Double Features</i>
	%	%
Upper Income-Group	75	25
Middle Income-Group	63	37
Lower Income-Group	47	53
On Relief	42	58

In New England a majority of the *whole population* votes in favor of double bills. The vote by different sections of the country is as follows:

	<i>For Single Features</i>	<i>For Double Features</i>
	%	%
NEW ENGLAND STATES	43	57
MIDDLE ATLANTIC STATES	55	45
EAST CENTRAL STATES	62	38
WEST CENTRAL STATES	57	43
SOUTH	58	42
ROCKY MOUNTAIN STATES	62	38
PACIFIC STATES	56	44

It would be untrue to say that double features are directly responsible for keeping many persons away from the box-office. The reasons go deeper. The adverse vote on double bills is more a reaction to the poor pictures commonly found on double bills, than to the fatigue and length of time involved in seeing a double bill.

Persons interviewed who disliked double features were asked whether they would change their attitude if *both pictures* on a double bill were good. When this qualification is added, opinion divides 64 to 36 in favor of double features.

Propaganda

November, 1940,
April & September, 1941.

In three nation-wide surveys the Institute asked representative cross-sections of theatergoers: "Do you think there has been too much propaganda in the movies lately?" [IF YES] "Too much of *what* propaganda?"

A comparison of the results obtained on these three separate occasions indicates that, following an increase in public intolerance of propaganda in pictures during the winter of 1940-41, the trend has subsequently been arrested. Today [September, 1941], only one theatergoer in every three thinks that "there has been too much propaganda in the movies lately."

1) "Do you think there has been too much propaganda in the movies lately?"

	<i>November</i>	<i>April</i>	<i>September</i>
	1940	1941	1941
	%	%	%
Yes, too much propaganda	25	32	32
No	60	54	56
No opinion	15	14	12

Thus we find that, as of September, 1941, seven theatergoers in every ten do not think there has been too much propaganda in the movies lately. It would probably be fair to count the 'No Opinion' vote on the side of those who do not think there has been too much propaganda, since lack of intolerance generally implies tacit tolerance.

2) Too much of what propaganda?

	<i>November</i>	<i>April</i>	<i>September</i>
	1940	1941	1941
	%	%	%
Anti-Nazi	37	36	28
War	31	32	41
Patriotic, flag-waving	12	9	13
Pro-British	8	13	11
All other	13	15	8
	—	—	—
	101*	105*	101*

Pennsylvania

November, 1940.

In a special survey, the Institute measured the opinions of Pennsylvania theatergoers in regard to two issues which had been keenly debated in that state: Sunday movies and the banning of *THE RAMPARTS WE WATCH* by the State Board of Censors.

A representative cross-section of theatergoers throughout the state was asked this question: "Do you approve or disapprove of having the movie theaters open on Sunday in your community?"

* Totals add to more than 100 per cent because some respondents mentioned more than one classification.

The results:

	%
Approve Sunday movies	82
Disapprove Sunday movies	18

These figures indicate that the Lord's Day Alliance, which was fighting to drive Sunday films out of the state, represented only a vocal minority of public opinion in Pennsylvania. At the same time it must be remembered that our poll was confined to persons who go to the movies at least once a month. It is possible, though not probable, that a majority of those persons who stay away from the movies might vote *against* Sunday movies.

In the same survey theatergoers were asked whether they approved or disapproved of the action taken by the State Board of Censors in banning *THE RAMPARTS WE WATCH*:

	%
Approve banning	13
Disapprove banning	87

The Hays Office

January, 1941.

Forty-six per cent of the persons interviewed were able to describe the functions of the Hays Office with at least some degree of accuracy.

A further 8 per cent had heard of the Hays Office but were unable to describe its functions. The remaining 46 per cent said that they had never heard of the Hays Office.

One clause in the Code lays it down that "The use of liquor in American life, when not required by the plot or for proper characterization, will not be shown." In this connection we asked a representative cross-section of theatergoers: "Do you object to movie scenes in which women drink?"

We were somewhat surprised to find that as many as 25 per cent of all persons interviewed answered this question in the affirmative. Objections to scenes in which women drink were based upon two main premises — either that it sets a "Bad example for children," or quite simply that the sight of a woman drinking is "offensive."

In the same survey we asked: "Do you object to movie scenes in

which women smoke?" In this case we found that only 13 per cent object. Here again the main reasons for objecting were "Bad example for children" and "Smoking ought to be left to the men."

Stars' Salaries

December, 1940.

We asked a representative cross-section of theatergoers: "Do you think the big Hollywood stars, as a group, are earning their salaries?"

Replies were as follows:

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
	<i>%</i>	<i>%</i>
TOTAL	68	32
Prosperous	55	45
Upper-Middle	63	37
Lower-Middle	66	34
Poor	72	28

The analysis by income-groups shows a trend which is the reverse of what most observers would have guessed.

More than half of those who consider that the stars are earning their salaries point to the long hours and physical strain to which the stars are subjected. Less than one per cent justify the high salaries on the grounds that the stars sell tickets at the box-office, and only a handful referred to the high tax burden or the short professional life.

Communism

August, 1940.

In a nation-wide survey the Institute sought to measure the damage caused by allegations of Communism in the motion picture industry. This survey revealed that these allegations had had a very high 'publicity penetration,' but the evidence indicated that most theatergoers were not influenced by what they heard.

A representative cross-section were asked whether they had noticed the recent newspaper stories about Communism in Hollywood. Two theatergoers out of every three [66 per cent] said YES, they had noticed them. When respondents were asked to name any Hollywood stars "who

are supposed to be Communists," 52 per cent — a remarkably high proportion — named one or more.

The personalities mentioned most frequently were:

	%
James Cagney	37
Fredric March	19
Humphrey Bogart	17
Jean Muir	13
Franchot Tone	6
Lionel Stander	4
Melvyn Douglas	4
George Raft	3
Francis Lederer	3

Respondents were next asked: "Would the fact that a movie star is a Communist make any difference to you if you wanted to see his pictures?"

A substantial majority [68 per cent] said that it would make no difference. Most of these persons pointed out that they go to the movies in search of entertainment and that the political creed of the players is a matter of indifference to them.

Typical were the following comments:

"To be truthful it would not — though I suppose I should say it would."

— Housewife, age 43, husband a bus-driver in New York City.

"I don't care what their political beliefs are."

— Receiving clerk, age 22, in Tampa department store.

"I don't care none about their politics."

— Junk-cart man, age 19, in Chicago.

"Why would it? — It's the show I want to see."

— Boy, age 16, on curb service in Lincoln, Nebraska.

On the other hand, 29 per cent said that the fact that a movie star was a Communist *would* make a difference to them. Many of these persons replied in terms of money, saying that they were reluctant to con-

tribute their quarters to the financial resources of a Communist. A bricklayer in Baltimore put it this way: "They get a lot of money for acting. You never know what they might do with it."

The same sentiment was expressed by the wife of a Johnstown steel engineer, who told our interviewer: "I wouldn't want him to have my money. I wouldn't want to contribute to anybody like that." And a Chicago salesgirl: "I'd be ashamed to contribute to their salaries by seeing their pictures."

A large number of respondents — unwilling to believe anything so unpleasant — dismissed the whole subject as "newspaper gossip," "untrue," "impossible," or "propaganda," while a handful of theatergoers in the lowest income-group expressed open sympathy with Communism.

Of the six stars named most frequently as Communists, only *one* — Franchot Tone — registered a decline in marquee value during the period of this smear campaign — March to August, 1940. Cagney, March, Bogart and Raft registered small gains, and Douglas showed no change. In the case of Tone it was probably prolonged absence from the screen which caused the decline.

Oscars

March, 1941.

In a nation-wide survey conducted two weeks after the Academy banquet we asked a representative cross-section of theatergoers if they happened to know "which actor and actress won the Motion Picture Academy Award [you know, the 'Oscar'] for the best performance of 1940?"

No less than 58 per cent knew that Ginger Rogers won, while 56 per cent knew that James Stewart won. It is remarkable that the 'publicity penetration' of these Awards should be so high.

CHAPTER VIII

The Verdict of the Box-Office

WHY DO LIFE insurance companies give a thorough medical examination to each applicant for a policy? Because, obviously, the medical examination helps these companies to sort out the good risks from the bad ones. It gives them the chance to take advantage of the laws of probability—laws which are confirmed every year in the mortality tables.

What sort of questions are asked in these examinations? Every question is based upon an actuarial analysis of the experience of life insurance companies. For example, it has been found by studying the records that applicants whose parents lived to an age of over 70 are better risks than those whose parents lived to an age of less than 60.

So questions about the longevity of their parents are asked of every applicant.

Does this mean that every applicant whose parents didn't live to be 70 years of age must be rejected? No. But the fact that they did not live to be 70 is a factor which must be included on the *minus* side of the ledger—and must be balanced by one or more *plus* factors. The applicant is accepted only if the total *plus* factors outweigh the total *minus* factors.

Can the same actuarial approach, the same analysis of experience be made in the case of the motion picture industry? Can the box-office figures on all the A pictures of the last few years be analyzed in such a way as to discover the *plus* and *minus* factors to be applied to new stories under consideration?

In July, 1941, the Institute embarked upon just such an analysis of the pictures which have been shown in RKO theaters during the last three years. This analysis has been conducted under the supervision of Emery H. Ruby, former Director of Reader Research for TIME MAGAZINE, and Dr. Albert D. Annis, chief statistician to the Institute. It has occupied four members of our statistical staff for the last five months

and has been successful in isolating and evaluating scores of story elements and other factors which influence box-office performance.

This analysis is now being organized on a continuing basis. It provides a scale of values which will be of incalculable assistance, during the years to come, to the Institute and to those receiving its service.

Some of the results of this study came to us as a surprise, but in most cases the verdict of the box-office, when analyzed, confirms the tentative conclusions at which we had already arrived in the course of our other investigations. WAR as a story element, for example, emerges 7.9 per cent *above* average. MARITAL DIFFICULTIES rates 9.1 per cent *below*.

Consider, as another example, stories whose background is the oil industry. Last year there were two pictures with this background—FLOWING GOLD with O'Brien and Garfield, and BOOM TOWN with Tracy, Gable, Lamarr and Colbert. Before you can use the box-office results of these two pictures to arrive at any estimate of the oil business as a box-office factor, you have to discount their box-office results by the net marquee value of the stars appearing in them. Now that the Audit is available we are in a position to do just that. Only when these allowances for marquee value are completed is it possible to proceed with an analysis of the other factors involved.

The VERDICT OF THE BOX-OFFICE, organized on a continuing basis and kept constantly up-to-date, will reveal the latest *trends* in the popularity of various general types of pictures—action, biography, family, crime, sophisticated comedy, slapstick, musicals, romance, super-westerns, whodunits and so on. By charting the net box-office ratings of each type year by year we shall be able to predict the waxing and waning of cycles in popular demand.

Our comprehensive study and analysis has already shed light on such controversies as the PRESENT *versus* the PAST, COSTUME *versus* NON-COSTUME, the UNITED STATES *versus* FOREIGN COUNTRIES, LOVE INTEREST *versus* NO LOVE INTEREST, HAPPY ENDING *versus* SAD ENDING.

It also evaluates such story elements as show business, Hollywood, school, college, jungle, newspaper, politics, the tropics, prison, aviation, the sea, the circus, slums, spies, the Old South, the U. S. Army and Navy, the Civil War, race-track, gangs and bandits, doctors, science, court trial, social problems and scores of other factors.

The following samples will give the reader an indication of the kind of information which is emerging from this mammoth study. By the

time it is completed we shall have comparable figures on more than two hundred box-office factors.

WHAT THE FIGURES MEAN

The plus or minus figures show the relationship of pictures containing each factor to the average for all pictures. For example, the factor 'TECHNICOLOR' emerges as +13.6 per cent. This means that, after discounting star values, the average box-office performance of pictures in TECHNICOLOR is 13.6 per cent higher than the average.

BEST-SELLERS vs. PLAYS

The verdict of the box-office is that BEST-SELLERS rate much higher than STAGE-PLAYS as a box-office factor.

'CLASSICS' [Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, Mark Twain, etc.] rate almost as high as BEST-SELLERS.

BEST-SELLERS	+16.9
CLASSICS	+13.6
PLAYS	+ 1.7

We have also found that the special appeal of a best-seller is not confined to those who have read the book, but extends also to those who think they *ought* to read it.

APPEAL FOR MEN, WOMEN AND KIDS

Producers have always argued about the importance of giving pictures appeal for *women*. The verdict of the box-office is that it is more important to give pictures appeal for *children* and appeal for *men*.

Pictures which possess strong appeal for KIDS	+6.9
Pictures which possess strong appeal for MEN	+4.8
Pictures which possess strong appeal for WOMEN	Average

IMPROPRIETY

Do *risqué* dialogue and situations help or hurt a picture? Whatever policy may be dictated by long-range wisdom, the verdict of the box-office — with which we are here concerned — is that *risqué* dialogue and situations definitely help.

Not <i>risqué</i> at all	-2.1
A little <i>risqué</i>	+1.5
Very <i>risqué</i>	+5.1

HOW TO USE THIS INFORMATION

Obviously, facts of the kind revealed by this study must be used with considerable discretion. They must be looked upon as a guide in making decisions about stories and not as a rule-of-thumb procedure.

There will, for instance, be many box-office successes which contain no *risqué* matter whatsoever. There will be many pictures which make little or no appeal to youngsters but which will nevertheless be box-office hits. There will be some pictures which are made from best-sellers but which will be failures. In short, no one factor in any single instance will account for the success or failure of a picture at the box-office.

But the pictures which have the greatest number of plus factors and the fewest minus factors will always stand the best chance of being successful at the box-office.

Thus, used with judgment and not as an arbitrary standard to be followed under all circumstances, the Continuing Analysis of favorable and unfavorable factors affecting the verdict of the box-office should be of inestimable value.

For, when all is said, this Analysis represents the scientific evaluation of the entire box-office experience of the motion picture industry on all A pictures during the last three years. It represents a scientific analysis of \$175,000,000 worth of getting people into theaters.

CHAPTER IX

Who Goes to the Movies?

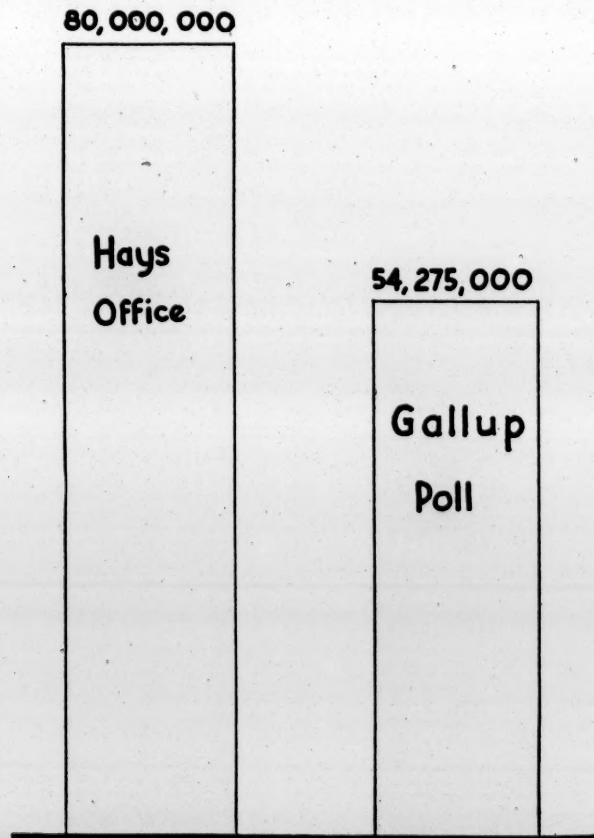
WHEN films cost fortunes and distribution has only a few main channels, it is imperative that every feature should appeal to the largest possible number of theatergoers. At present there is no room for pictures which appeal to minorities. For better or for worse, the industry is geared to the majority. If the majority does not want the picture, the investment is jeopardized.

It therefore becomes of paramount importance for the producer to have a clear picture of the majority. The more he knows about ordinary, average theatergoers, the less likely is he to make costly mistakes in estimating their reactions. Some producers seem to have the same misconception of the average theatergoer as Mr. J. P. Morgan when he made his classic definition of an *average* family — "a family with only one servant."

How rich and how poor *are* the customers who keep this industry going? How old are they? What is their average age? How many go to the movies every week?

We have spent a great deal of time and research effort in answering these questions, and we find that the facts are actually rather different from what anybody has guessed.

II.

TWO ESTIMATES OF THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF TICKETS
PURCHASED WEEKLY IN 1940

Our estimate of 54,275,000 tickets per week is consistent with the findings of the U. S. Census. It is also consistent with the figures published by the Ohio Tax Commission, the Iowa Tax Commission and the Oklahoma Tax Commission.

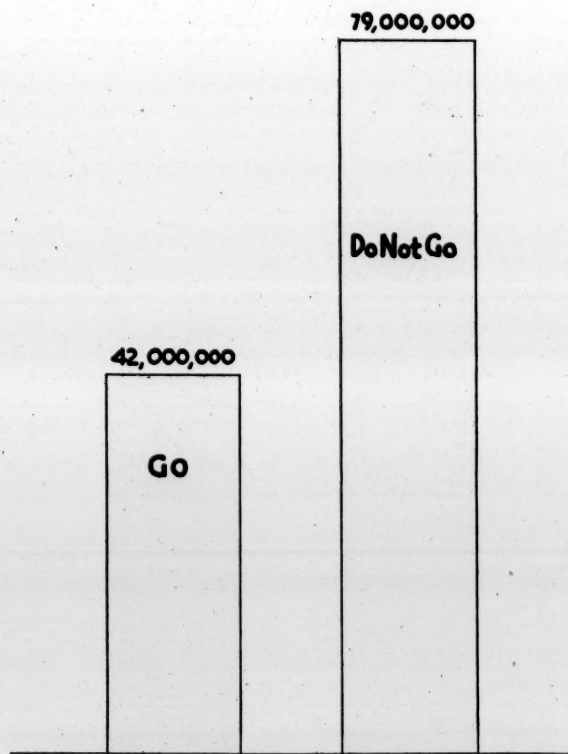
This estimate supersedes two previous estimates released by the Institute — to the Hays Office in 1938 and to the press in 1940.

Notice that this chart shows the number of *tickets purchased*. Some of these tickets were purchased by repeaters — persons who attend twice or more per week.

III.

HOW MANY PERSONS ATTEND MOTION PICTURE
THEATERS IN AN AVERAGE WEEK?

1940

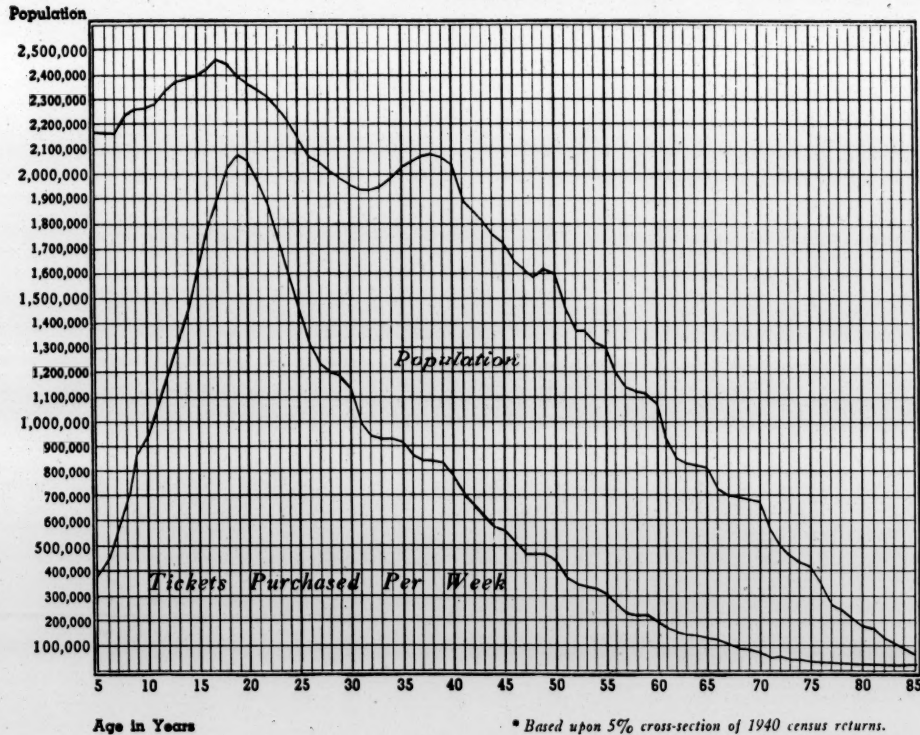


This chart refers to persons between the ages of five and eighty-five. It shows that 35 per cent of the population attend motion picture theaters in an average week, while 65 per cent stay away. The 42,000,000 persons who go to the movies in an average week buy 54,275,000 tickets, the difference being accounted for by repeaters.

IV.

NUMBER OF TICKETS PURCHASED PER WEEK
BY INDIVIDUAL AGES

1940



This chart shows the number of theater tickets purchased weekly by persons of each individual age, in relation to the total number of persons of that age. The average age of theatergoers is only twenty-seven and one-half years. That is the *bull's-eye* at which to aim pictures.

Notice how sharply attendance drops away after age nineteen.

NOTE:

The foregoing chart shows something which would be difficult to believe if it were not for corroborative evidence — that more seats are filled by 5-year-olds than by 55-year-olds. It happens this way: There are in the United States today 2,168,640 persons aged five. On the other hand, there are only 1,305,200 persons aged fifty-five. So it is possible for the fifty-fives to go to the movies one-and-a-half times as often as the

fives and still you would find more 5-year-olds in the total motion picture audience.

In an independent study conducted eight years ago, 55,000 children were interviewed in forty-four representative communities in Ohio. It was found that in the age-group 5 to 8 the average attendance was almost exactly twice per month. To keep up with that, average attendance at age fifty-five would have to be once a week!

In Columbus, Ohio, trained investigators clocked attendance at fifteen representative theaters over a period of three months, with total admissions of nearly 3,000,000. Of these admissions 3.1 per cent were under seven years old. Applying this percentage to our figure for national average admissions — 54,275,000 per week — we arrive at a total of 1,620,000 admissions per week for children under seven.

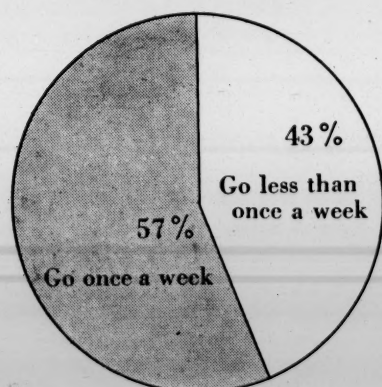
It was found that there was considerable difference in the age composition of audiences by neighborhood and downtown theaters. The neighborhood audiences were 25 per cent under fourteen years old, as against 6 per cent for downtown.

V.

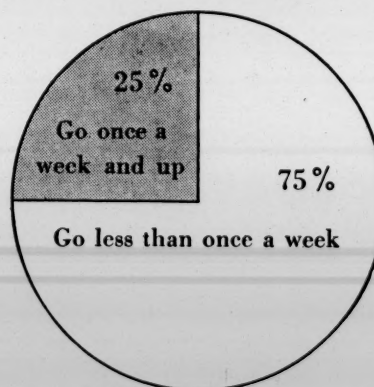
COMPARATIVE FREQUENCY OF ATTENDANCE BY PERSONS UNDER 30 YEARS AND PERSONS OVER 30 YEARS

1940

UNDER 30 YEARS



OVER 30 YEARS



This chart shows that the average person *under* thirty attends motion picture theaters approximately twice as frequently as the average person *over* thirty.

VI.

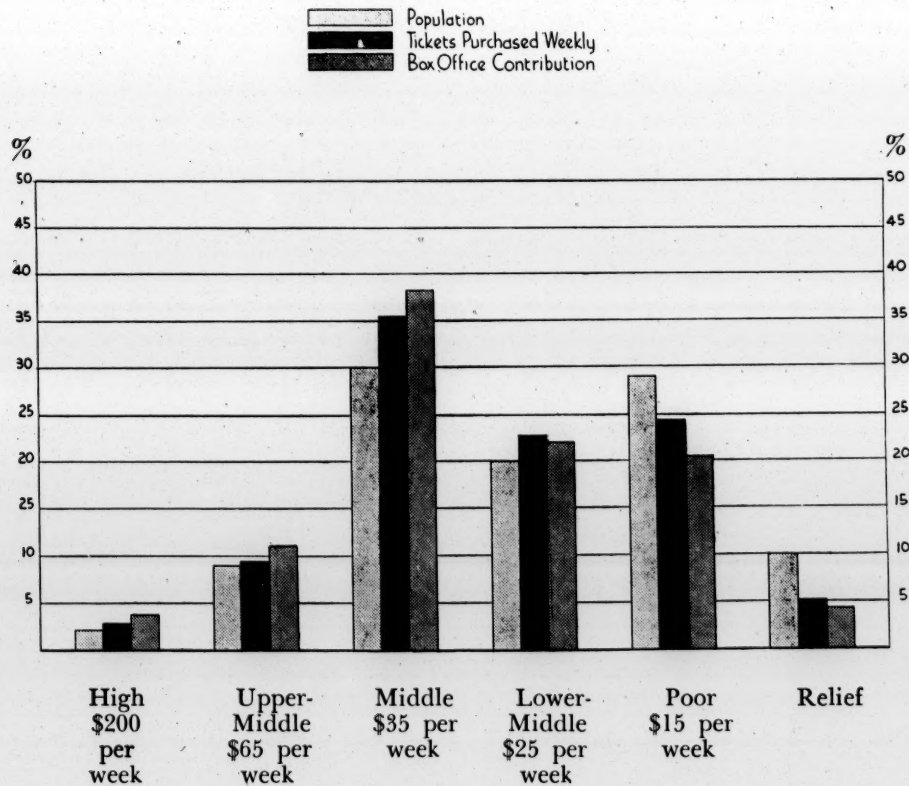
BOX-OFFICE CONTRIBUTION BY INCOME-GROUPS 1940

INCOME-GROUP	POPULATION	POPULATION PER CENT	TICKETS PURCHASED	TICKETS PURCHASED PER CENT	BOX-OFFICE CONTRIBU- TION DOLLARS	BOX-OFFICE CONTRIBU- TION PER CENT
HIGH INCOME [Over \$7,000 per year]	2,633,386	% 2	1,544,928	% 3	\$500,556	% 4
UPPER-MIDDLE [\$2,500-\$7,000 per year]	11,850,234	9	5,143,001	9	1,476,041	11
MIDDLE [\$1,500-\$2,500 per year]	39,500,782	30	19,279,147	36	5,089,695	38
LOWER-MIDDLE [\$1,000-\$1,500 per year]	26,333,854	20	12,337,411	23	2,923,966	22
POOR [Under \$1,000 per year]	38,184,090	29	13,173,511	24	2,726,917	21
RELIEF [Under \$750 per year]	13,166,928	10	2,791,389	5	575,026	4
TOTALS	131,669,274	100	54,269,387	100	\$13,292,201	100

VII.

WEEKLY BOX-OFFICE CONTRIBUTION
BY INCOME-GROUPS

1940



This chart demonstrates the relative unimportance of the income-group in which producers and directors are found. The typical theatergoer has a family income of \$28 per week. No less than 88 per cent of all tickets purchased in the United States are purchased by persons whose family income is lower than \$50 per week.

VIII.

TICKETS PURCHASED WEEKLY BY MALES AND FEMALES
IN EACH INCOME-GROUP

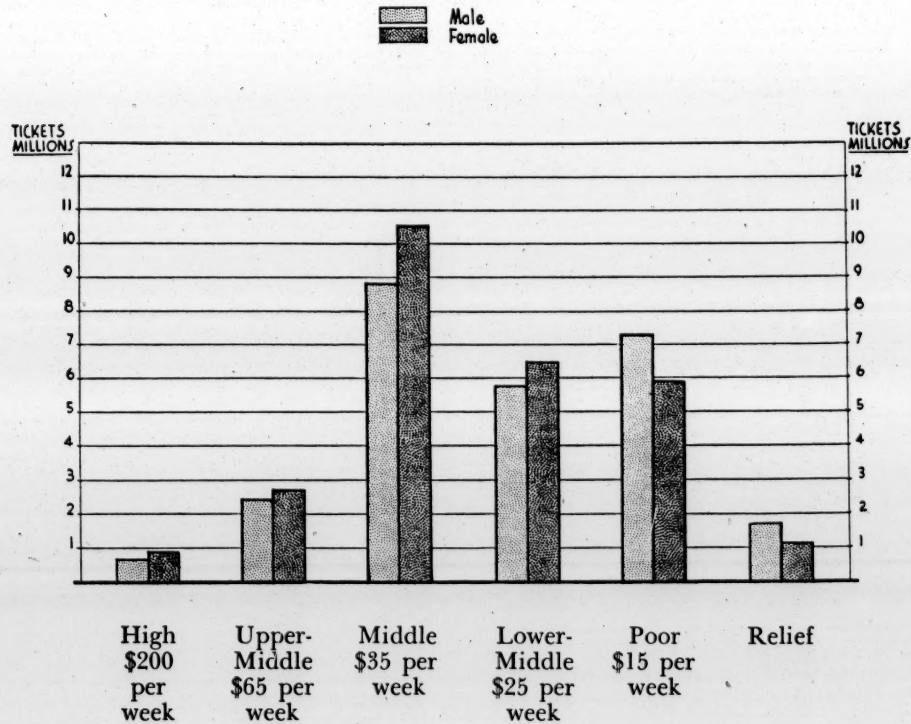
1940

INCOME-GROUP	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
HIGH INCOME [Over \$7,000 per year]	662,112	882,816	1,544,928
UPPER-MIDDLE [\$2,500-\$7,000 per year]	2,452,998	2,690,003	5,143,001
MIDDLE [\$1,500-\$2,500 per year]	8,763,249	10,515,898	19,279,147
LOWER-MIDDLE [\$1,000-\$1,500 per year]	5,846,116	6,491,295	12,337,411
POOR [Under \$1,000 per year]	7,254,977	5,918,534	13,173,511
RELIEF [Under \$750 per year]	1,645,866	1,145,523	2,791,389
TOTALS	26,625,318	27,644,069	54,269,387

IX.

TICKETS PURCHASED WEEKLY BY
MALES AND FEMALES IN EACH INCOME-GROUP

1940

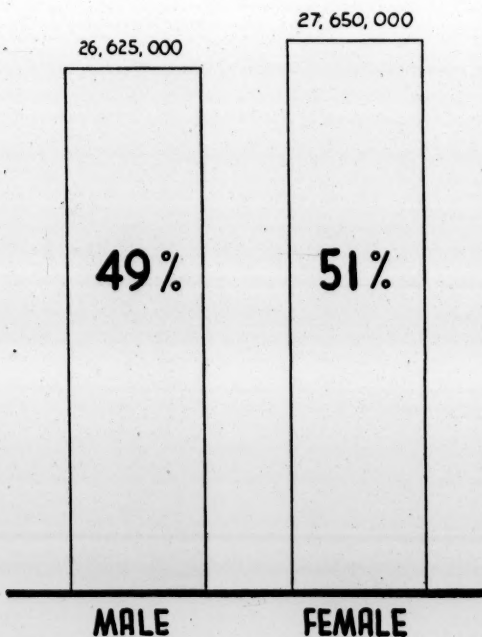


Most motion picture executives are convinced that women go to the movies more often than men. This is true in their own economic stratum, but it is not true in the lower income levels. In poor families the women are generally too busy with the children and the cooking to go to the movies as often as their husbands. This is particularly true in families where the man is unemployed, with time on his hands.

X.

TOTAL NUMBER OF TICKETS PURCHASED WEEKLY BY
MALES AND FEMALES IN ALL INCOME-GROUPS

1940



Perhaps the most revolutionary discovery yet made by the Institute is that only 51 per cent of the national audience is female. This estimate is based on interviews in which tens of thousands of persons of all ages and all income levels, in every state in the Union, were questioned on their frequency of attendance. It has been corroborated by a count of 54,500 theatergoers outside fifty theaters throughout the United States over a period of one week, including matinees and evening performances.

XI.

Writing in the NEW YORK TIMES, Bosley Crowther recently referred to "the *established fact* that filmgoers' tastes are largely determined by the female customers" [*italics ours*]. Audience research has proved that, like so many other "established facts," this hoary generalization is pure superstition. Like the mythical 85,000,000 weekly attendance, the theory of female predominance has too long been taken for granted. It is based on two false premises:

- 1) That upwards of 70 per cent of the film audience is female — which is untrue. Our studies show that the *average* proportion of males and females is 49 per cent male and 51 per cent female, which happens to be very near the population split.

There is considerable *variation* in the sex composition of audiences from picture to picture.

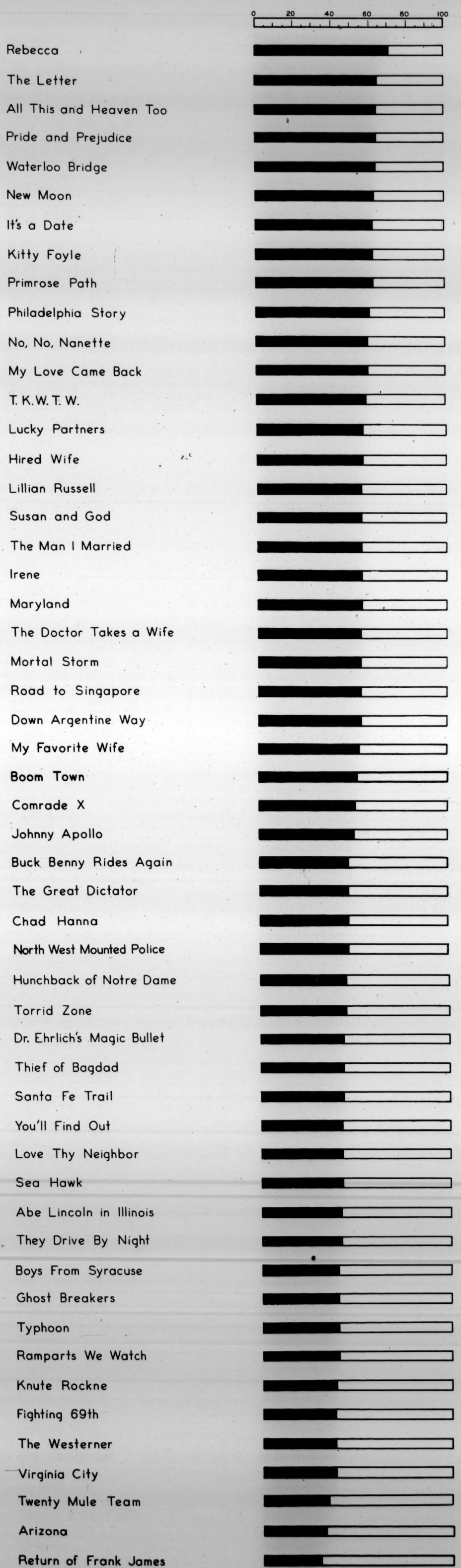
You will actually find more box-office successes among the pictures whose appeal is predominantly to men, than among the pictures whose appeal is predominantly to women. [See also page 137.]

- 2) That females exercise greater influence than males on the *choice* of picture — wives picking their husbands' pictures, etc. As a matter of fact it is true that when mixed couples attend together [girl friend with boy friend, husband with wife, brother with sister, etc.] the female is more often the chooser of the film.* But men attend the theater alone so much more often than women that the net result is that in forty-nine cases out of every hundred the picture is chosen by a male.

* This influence is based not so much upon the social prerogative of women, as upon their greater knowledge of pictures; the average publicity penetration is higher with women than with men.

APPENDIX

PERCENTAGE OF FEMALES IN AUDIENCE



Exhibitors Don't Know Their Customers

August, 1941.

A representative cross-section of the theatergoing public was asked: "Have you ever requested the manager of the movie theater you attend most frequently to show a picture which you especially wanted to see?" Ninety-five per cent replied in the negative.

The same respondents were asked: "Have you ever discussed movies with him?" Ninety per cent said NO, they had never discussed movies with him.

The next question was: "Do you know his name?" Seventy-seven per cent said NO, they did not know his name.

"Would you recognize him if you saw him on the street?" NO, 62 per cent.

All of which tends to confirm the widely-held belief that so far as the vast majority of theatergoers is concerned, the average exhibitor remains anonymous.

Two of these same questions were also asked about the president of the respondent's bank, the manager of his drug-store and the manager of his grocery. It was found that of all these merchants the theater manager is the least known to the general public. Even bank presidents maintain closer personal contact with their customers.

	<i>Know His Name</i>	<i>Recognize Him</i>
	%	%
Grocery Manager	54	86
Drug-store Manager	50	82
Bank President	24	53
Theater Manager	23	38

The ticket-buyers who know their exhibitor are mostly persons of his own age, his own economic status and — his own sex. In other words, his own little circle of personal friends.

QUESTION I: What theater do you attend most frequently?

QUESTION II: Have you ever requested the manager of that theater to show [or book] a picture which you especially wanted to see?

	YES	NO
	%	%
Habitual theatergoers [once a week or more]	6	94
Irregular theatergoers [less than once a week]	3	97
Persons frequenting circuit theaters	3	97
Persons frequenting independent theaters	10	90
Persons frequenting downtown theaters	2	98
Persons frequenting neighborhood theaters	8	92
ALL THEATERGOERS	5	95

QUESTION III: Have you ever discussed movies with him?

	YES	NO
	%	%
Habitual theatergoers [once a week or more]	13	87
Irregular theatergoers [less than once a week]	6	94
Persons frequenting circuit theaters	7	93
Persons frequenting independent theaters	17	83
Persons frequenting downtown theaters	7	93
Persons frequenting neighborhood theaters	14	86
ALL THEATERGOERS	10	90

QUESTION IV: Do you happen to know his name?

	YES	NO
	%	%
Habitual theatergoers [once a week or more]	23	77
Irregular theatergoers [less than once a week]	23	77
Persons frequenting circuit theaters	18	82
Persons frequenting independent theaters	37	63
Prosperous	26	74
Upper-Middle	26	74
Middle	22	78
Poor	19	81
Cities over 500,000	6	94
100,000 to 500,000	18	82
10,000 to 100,000	19	81
Under 10,000	52	48
ALL THEATERGOERS	23	77

QUESTION V: Would you recognize him if you saw him on the street?

	YES	NO
	%	%
Habitual theatergoers [once a week or more]	44	56
Irregular theatergoers [less than once a week]	32	68
Persons frequenting circuit theaters	29	71
Persons frequenting independent theaters	62	38
Persons frequenting downtown theaters	34	66
Persons frequenting neighborhood theaters	42	58
ALL THEATERGOERS	38	62

The 9 o'Clock Plan

May, 1941.

On March 9, 1941, we received instructions to poll the theatergoing public in New York City on its attitude toward the 9 O'CLOCK PLAN, which was then on trial in RKO theaters.

Before we could begin our survey we found it necessary to acquire a rudimentary knowledge of some of the problems involved in the operation of the Plan. In the course of this preliminary study, two 'pilot' surveys were undertaken:

- 1) Fifty-six theater managers were interviewed — twenty-two RKO managers, fourteen Loew's managers and twenty 'other' managers. Seventy-three per cent of the managers interviewed were found to be opposed to the Plan.
- 2) Before our final questionnaire was decided a trial questionnaire was tested in New York. This trial questionnaire revealed these among other facts:
 - a) Not everyone who attends motion picture theaters understands what is meant by 'main feature.' In some houses where the main feature is shown last, many of the patrons speak of it as the "second feature" simply because it goes on after the B feature.
 - b) Some persons who actually attend theaters on the 9 O'CLOCK PLAN do not realize that the Plan exists, while a few who attend theaters which are not on the Plan are under the erroneous impression that the main feature is shown in these houses at 9 P.M.

II.

The first problem assigned to us was to find out what proportion of all New York theatergoers know about the 9 O'CLOCK PLAN. Each person in the entire cross-section was therefore asked for a "Yes" or "No" answer to this question: "The last showing of the main feature in some theaters starts on week-day evenings at 9 or 9:30 instead of the more usual 10:30. Have you heard about this Plan?"

Three out of every five persons [60 per cent] answered YES. Two out of five [40 per cent] had not heard about the Plan.

This result will be startling to those managers who had previously volunteered the opinion that by now everyone in New York must know about the Plan.

[May, 1941]

	<i>Have Heard</i>	<i>Have Not Heard</i>
	%	%
ALL PERSONS INTERVIEWED	60	40
MALES	61	39
FEMALES	59	41
AGE-GROUPS		
12 to 17 years old	59	41
18 to 30 years old	66	34
31 to 44 years old	61	39
45 and over	49	51
INCOME-GROUPS		
Prosperous	66	34
Upper-Middle	69	31
Middle	57	43
Poor	51	49
RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS		
Italian	40	60
Jewish	71	29
Negro	55	45
All others	60	40

	<i>Have Heard</i>	<i>Have Not Heard</i>
	%	%
FREQUENCY OF ATTENDANCE		
Once a week and up	66	34
2 to 3 times a month	51	49
Once a month	43	57
THOSE WHO FREQUENT THEATERS ON THE PLAN	62	38
THOSE WHO FREQUENT THEATERS NOT ON THE PLAN	54	46

III.

The next part of our assignment was to find out what proportion of the motion picture public likes the Plan better than the old schedule.

The procedure employed was to hand the respondent a card on which were printed two schedules — the old schedule and the 9 O'CLOCK PLAN — and to ask this question: "Here are two schedules of movie programs at double feature theaters. One schedule shows the main feature coming on at 6 o'clock and at 9 o'clock; the other shows the main feature coming on at 7:30 and at 10:30. Which of those two schedules is more convenient for you personally?"

"B" or Second Feature 6:00 P. M.
MAIN "A" FEATURE 7:30 P. M.

—
"B" or Second Feature 9:00 P. M.
MAIN "A" FEATURE 10:30 P. M.

MAIN "A" FEATURE 6:00 P. M.
"B" or Second Feature 7:30 P. M.

—
MAIN "A" FEATURE 9:00 P. M.
"B" or Second Feature 10:30 P. M.

Forty-six per cent voted for the 9 O'CLOCK PLAN while 43 per cent preferred the old schedule and 11 per cent expressed no preference. This result shows a small majority in favor of the Plan, but our experience is that most of the No Preference vote really favors the *status quo* — in this case the old schedule.

[May, 1941]

	<i>Prefer Old Schedule %</i>	<i>Prefer 9 O'Clock Plan %</i>	<i>No Preference %</i>
ALL PERSONS INTERVIEWED	43	46	11
MALES	46	42	12
FEMALES	39	50	11
AGE-GROUPS			
12 to 17 years old	41	42	17
18 to 30 years old	46	48	6
31 and over	39	47	14
INCOME-GROUPS			
Prosperous	57	40	3
Upper-Middle	44	50	6
Middle	41	45	14
Poor	35	46	19
USUAL PRICE PAID [Tax Inc'd]			
Those paying under 25¢	36	39	25
Those paying 25 to 35¢	43	50	7
Those paying 36 to 40¢	51	41	8
Those paying over 40¢	45	50	5
RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS			
Italian	46	40	14
Jewish	39	54	7
Negro	38	45	17
All others	45	45	10
FINISH EVENING MEAL			
Before 7 o'clock [44% of total]	43	41	16
7:00 to 8:00 [41% of total]	43	49	8
8:00 and after [15% of total]	40	54	6
TIME OF ARRIVAL AT THEATER			
7:00 to 7:59 [20% of total]	61	37	2
8:00 to 8:59 [27% of total]	39	58	3
9:00 onwards [14% of total]	45	47	8
THOSE PREFERRING DOUBLE FEATURES	45	42	13
THOSE PREFERRING SINGLE FEATURES	40	53	7

IV.

One of the objectives of the 9 O'CLOCK PLAN is to get patrons into bed earlier. It is argued that theatergoing has always involved an undesirable upheaval in the daily routine of the average man, that every time he is kept up past his normal bed-time he feels fatigued the next morning and that in general theatergoing should be made as much a part of his regular routine as is the purchase of a package of cigarettes.

This argument is often countered by the assertion that, even under the old schedule, few if any theatergoers are kept up beyond their bed-time. What is the truth?

In our survey we asked New York theatergoers: "When you go to the movies do you plan to stay up later than usual?" No less than 43 per cent replied in the affirmative — a figure which is in line with our previous finding [July, 1940] that 40 per cent of the population of the United States are kept up beyond their bed-time whenever they go to the theater.

V.

Another objective of the 9 O'CLOCK PLAN is to make theatergoing more convenient for those who dine late. We find that only 15 per cent of all New York theatergoers finish their evening meal after 7:59.

[May, 1941]

<i>Finish Evening Meal</i>	<i>%</i>
Before 6 o'clock	9
6:00 to 6:29	14
6:30 to 6:59	21
7:00 to 7:29	25
7:30 to 7:59	16
8:00 to 8:29	7
8:29 onwards	8
	100%

Here are the times at which New Yorkers arrive at the motion picture theater, as revealed by our survey:

<i>Arrive at Theater</i>	<i>%</i>
Before 6 o'clock	35
6:00 to 6:29	3
6:30 to 6:59	1
7:00 to 7:29	9
7:30 to 7:59	11
8:00 to 8:29	14
8:30 to 8:59	13
9:00 to 9:29	9
9:30 to 9:59	2
9:59 onwards	3
	100%

VI.

All those who had voted for the Plan were asked whether they would prefer to have the main feature go on at 9 or 9:30. Seventy-six per cent voted for 9 o'clock, 13 per cent voted for 9:30, while 11 per cent expressed no preference.

[May, 1941]

	<i>Prefer 9 O'Clock</i>	<i>Prefer 9:30</i>	<i>No Preference</i>
ALL PERSONS VOTING FOR THE PLAN	76	13	11
MALES	75	15	10
FEMALES	77	12	11
AGE-GROUPS			
12 to 17 years old	74	16	10
18 to 30 years old	75	16	9
31 to 44 years old	76	10	14
45 and over	80	8	12
INCOME-GROUPS			
Prosperous	81	11	8
Upper-Middle	77	10	13
Middle	73	16	11
Poor	74	15	11
USUAL PRICE PAID [Tax Inc'd]			
Those paying under 25¢	72	16	12
Those paying 25 to 35¢	74	13	13
Those paying 36 to 40¢	81	11	8
Those paying over 40¢	76	14	10
FREQUENCY OF ATTENDANCE			
Once a week and up	74	15	11
2 to 3 times a month	78	10	12
Once a month	83	12	5

VII.

To round out the information obtained by this study on the likes and dislikes of New York theatergoers, it was thought advisable to include a question on double *versus* single features.

We find that 63 per cent vote for double features and only 37 per cent for single features. Here are the breakdowns on this question for each segment in New York City:

[May, 1941]

	<i>Prefer Single Features</i>	<i>Prefer Double Features</i>
	%	%
ALL PERSONS INTERVIEWED	37	63
MALES	36	64
FEMALES	39	61
AGE-GROUPS		
12 to 17 years old	16	84
18 to 30 years old	42	58
31 to 44 years old	45	55
45 and over	40	60
INCOME-GROUPS		
Prosperous	55	45
Upper-Middle	47	53
Middle	35	65
Poor	21	79
USUAL PRICE PAID [Tax Inc'd]		
Those paying under 25¢	18	82
Those paying 25 to 35¢	33	67
Those paying 36 to 40¢	35	65
Those paying over 40¢	52	48
RACIAL AND RELIGIOUS		
Italian	26	74
Jewish	49	51
Negro	16	84
All Others	35	65
FREQUENCY OF ATTENDANCE		
Once a week and up	33	67
2 to 3 times a month	49	51
Once a month	47	53

Hebbronville, Texas.
March 6, 1941

Dr. George Gallup
Princeton, N.J.

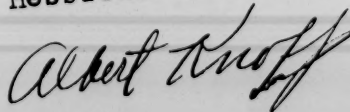
Dear Dr. Gallup:

I am a small town theatre Manager, and I usually find out if the patrons like the picture or not, and when one comes along that they walk out on, then there is something wrong with the picture, and it so happened that they walked out on the picture "GRAPES OF WRATH" which was awarded the best picture of last year, and we also got more complaints on this picture, from our patrons, than any other. Another picture which was one of the big specials which failed to please our patrons was "OUR TOWN" in fact it was almost a total flop here,.

Since you made the recent survey and named the picture "BOOMTOWN" the best of the year, I have had more people tell me that they all agreed with your survey, after all its the public Movie patron who pays the admission and I beleive they should have a say which is the best picture each year, I hope you will make a Public survey each year and that way we can find out which really was the best of the year.

Yours very truly

Albert Knopp
Hebbronville, Texas



For Release Wednesday, Feb. 26, 1941

"Boom Town" Named Best-Liked Picture of 1940 in Nation-wide Survey of Movie-Going Public

**'Knute Rockne',
'Rebecca' and
'Northwest Passage'
Also Rank High**

By DR. GEORGE GALLUP
Director, American Institute
of Public Opinion
Copyright, 1941

PRINCETON, N. J., Feb. 25.—"Boom Town," a picture of oil wildcatters starring Spencer Tracy, Clark Gable, Claudette Colbert and Hedy Lamarr has been voted the best-liked motion picture of 1940 by the movie-going public in a survey conducted from coast to coast by the American Institute of Public Opinion.

"Knute Rockne," film depicting the life of the famous football coach, received the second highest number of votes, and "Rebecca" third.



This Thursday in Los Angeles the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences will make its award for the picture considered best in 1940 by the 12,000 or more workers in the motion picture industry. Today's Institute survey is not confined to a special group, but shows how the movie-going public generally—Mr. and Mrs. John Citizen whose nickels and dimes keep the motion picture industry going—would make the Academy Award if they had the say.

The survey was confined to pictures released between Jan. 1 and Nov. 30, 1940. Respondents were shown a list of more than one hundred top grossing pictures for that period, and asked the question: "Are there any pictures here which you especially liked?"

The six leading choices, in order of rank, are as follows:

1. Boom Town
2. Knute Rockne
3. Rebecca
4. Northwest Passage
5. Strike Up the Band
6. The Fighting 69th

The study covered two distinct types of movie fans—the "frequent" theater-goers (once a week or more), and the "infrequent" movie-goers (less than once a week). Hollywood producers are beginning to take increased interest in the "infrequent" movie-goers—the discriminating, critical and sometimes disgruntled abstainers—because their patronage and support is so desperately needed at this time when the industry's European revenues, formerly about one-fourth of total income, have been cut off.

Their Picture Proves Popular Choice of Movie-Goers



Spencer Tracy, Hedy Lamarr, Frank Morgan, Claudette Colbert and Clark Gable of the cast of "Boom Town," the picture voted best-liked film of 1940 in a national survey of movie-goers. The story of two oil wildcatters and their love for one woman was a 1940 box-office hit.

The contrast between the movie tastes of the frequent and the infrequent movie-goers is shown below:

FREQUENT THEATER-GOERS

(Once a week or more)

1. Boom Town
2. Knute Rockne
3. Northwest Passage
4. Rebecca
5. Strike Up the Band
6. The Fighting 69th

INFREQUENT THEATER-GOERS

(Less than once a week)

1. Rebecca
2. Boom Town
3. Northwest Passage
4. Knute Rockne
5. The Fighting 69th
6. All This and Heaven Too

"Rebecca" thus earns the distinction of being the picture which attracted the most abstainers.

The infrequent movie-goers show a preference for "special" pictures, such as pictures made from best-sellers and the more serious and ambitious dramatic attempts. "The Letter," for example, ranked fourteenth with the infrequent group, and thirty-sixth with the frequent. "Abe Lincoln in Illinois" was eighteenth with the infrequent, and thirty-seventh with the frequent.

Academy Nominations Contrasted

The pictures selected by the public as the best, are, with one exception, the pic-

tures which were most successful at the box-office. The exception is "Knute Rockne" which, although second in the Institute's survey, was not among the top leaders in terms of box-office receipts.

Pictures released after Nov. 30, 1940, were not included in the survey because they had not had time to reach audiences throughout the country. This ruled out three films which have been nominated for the Academy Award—"The Great Dictator," "Kitty Foyle" and "The Philadelphia Story," and another picture which has been popular since its December release, "Northwest Mounted Police."

It is interesting to note that of the six pictures selected by the public, only one, "Rebecca," is to be found among the ten nominated for final consideration in the Academy Award contest.

Apparently there is considerable difference of opinion between Hollywood and its customers.

The ten pictures nominated for the Academy Award by the industry itself are: "All This and Heaven Too," "Foreign Correspondent," "Kitty Foyle," "The Grapes of Wrath," "Our Town," "Rebecca," "The Great Dictator," "The Letter," "The Long Voyage Home," and "The Philadelphia Story."

Women's Tastes Differ From Men

Considerable variation was found in the survey between the

choices of men and of women. "All This and Heaven Too," for example, ranks second with women, thirty-ninth with men. "My Favorite Wife" finished in fourth place among women, but only thirty-fourth with men. "Knute Rockne" and "The Fighting 69th" were, on the other hand, more popular with men than with women.

MEN

1. Knute Rockne
2. Boom Town
3. Northwest Passage
4. The Fighting 69th
5. Sea Hawk
6. Strike Up the Band

WOMEN

1. Rebecca
2. All This and Heaven Too
3. Boom Town
4. My Favorite Wife
5. Strike Up the Band
6. Waterloo Bridge

Of the public's six top choices, three pictures were made by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (Boom Town, Northwest Passage and Strike Up the Band), two by Warner Brothers (Knute Rockne and The Fighting 69th) and one by David Selznick (Rebecca).

Spencer Tracy holds the distinction of starring in two of the public's six leading choices. He was the pugnacious and long-suffering wildcatter in "Boom Town," and the redoubtable leader of Rogers Rangers in "Northwest Passage."

RELEASE ON RECEIPT

'Gone With Wind' Trails Bible in Public Interest

Nation-Wide Survey of Americans Shows
Books That Have 'Interested'
Them Most

By DR. GEORGE GALLUP
Director, American Institute of Public Opinion

NEW YORK, Jan. 14.—An exploratory survey by the American Institute of Public Opinion offers an answer today to the question:—

What books of all time have the greatest interest for contemporary Americans?

Though library charts and publishers' records show which books are in greatest demand with the book-reading and book-buying publics, very little has been known about the average American's book standards.

So to a selected cross-section of men and women in every State and every walk of life—farmers, chauffeurs, business men, telephone operators, reliefers and their wives—the Institute put the question: "What is the most interesting book you have ever read?" The answers indicate today that:

1. The most popular single book on American bookshelves is the Bible.

2. Pressing the Bible closely at the present time is "Gone With the Wind," Margaret Mitchell's record-breaking novel of the South and the Civil War.

Nearly one person in five, of those having opinions, named the Bible. It was ranked first by men, by persons over thirty and by Southerners, Mid-Westerners and Westerners.

"Gone With the Wind" came first with women, with younger persons and with Easterners and New Englanders.

After the two leaders, the books most often mentioned are:

"Anthony Adverse," by Hervey Allen.

"The Citadel," by A. J. Cronin, a British author.

"How to Win Friends and Influence People," by Dale Carnegie.

"The Good Earth," by Pearl Buck, 1938 Nobel prize-winner for literature.

Best-Sellers

And Classics

THE 1938 survey shows a pre-dominance of recent fiction "best-sellers," plus a strong representation of popular classics. Only one book in the first 20 was originally published between 1900 and 1930, that book being Jack London's "Call of the Wild," published in 1903.

The complete list of leaders is:

1. The Bible
2. Gone With the Wind
3. Anthony Adverse
4. The Citadel
5. How to Win Friends and Influence People
6. The Good Earth
7. Ben Hur
8. Northwest Passage
9. Little Women
10. A Tale of Two Cities
11. Les Miserables
12. Magnificent Obsession
13. Adventures of Tom Sawyer
14. Treasure Island
15. Count of Monte Cristo
16. Robinson Crusoe
17. Ivanhoe
18. The Green Light
19. David Copperfield
20. Call of the Wild

The survey shows that the Bible is much less popular with young people than with their parents and grandparents. The following table shows how the interest in the Bible declines with younger persons in the survey:

Age	% Naming Bible
Fifty and Over	37%
Forty-nine to Thirty	17%
Under Thirty	6%

Books Public Calls 'Most Interesting'

The following are the leaders in the American Institute of Public Opinion's survey of "most interesting" books:

1. The Bible.
2. Gone With the Wind, by Margaret Mitchell.
3. Anthony Adverse, by Hervey Allen.
4. The Citadel, by A. J. Cronin.
5. How to Win Friends and Influence People, by Dale Carnegie.
6. The Good Earth, by Pearl Buck.
7. Ben Hur by General Lew Wallace.
8. Northwest Passage, by Kenneth Roberts.
9. Little Women, by Louisa May Alcott.
10. A Tale of Two Cities, by Charles Dickens.
11. Les Miserables, by Victor Hugo.
12. Magnificent Obsession, by Lloyd C. Douglas.
13. Adventures of Tom Sawyer, by Mark Twain.
14. Treasure Island, by Robert L. Stevenson.
15. Count of Monte Cristo, by Alexander Dumas.
16. Robinson Crusoe, by Daniel Defoe.
17. Ivanhoe, by Sir Walter Scott.
18. The Green Light, by Lloyd C. Douglas.
19. David Copperfield, by Charles Dickens.
20. Call of the Wild, by Jack London.

Influence of

The 'Movies'

NEARLY all the leaders have been seized upon by Hollywood as motion picture material. Even the Bible has been screened in part, and "Gone With the Wind" has been "in casting" for more than two years.

"Anthony Adverse" was brought to the screen and became one of the leading box office pictures of 1935. "The Citadel," "The Good Earth," "Little Women" and "A Tale of Two Cities" have also been turned into outstanding pictures recently.

Hollywood is preparing a film version of Kenneth Roberts' "Northwest Passage" and has even purchased the title rights to Dale Carnegie's "How to Win Friends and Influence People."

Throughout the country six persons in every ten singled out some book or other in answer to the Institute's question, while the remainder declared "no special book occurred" to them or that they did little reading at all.

Women had less trouble in naming a book than men.

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